Between Rome and Jerusalem: 300 Years of Roman -Judaean Relations

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Westport, Connecticut
London

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Sicker, Martin.
Between Rome and Jerusalem : 300 years of Roman-Judaean relations / Martin Sicker.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references (p.) and index.
ISBN 0–275–97140–6 (alk. paper)
1. Jews—History—168 B.C.–135 A.D. 2. Jews—History—70–638. 3. Palestine—History—70–638. 4. Jews—Palestine—History. 5. Jews—Palestine—Politics and government. I. Title: 300 years of Roman-Judaean relations. II. Title: Three hundred years of Roman-Judaean relations. III. Title.
DS121.7.S53 2001
933—dc21 00–058009

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data is available.

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Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 00–058009
ISBN: 0–275–97140–6

First published in 2001

Praeger Publishers, 88 Post Road West, Westport, CT 06881
An imprint of Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc.
www.praeger.com

Printed in the United States of America

The paper used in this book complies with the Permanent Paper Standard issued by the National Information Standards Organization (Z39.48–1984).

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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Introduction

Histories of ancient Israel during Roman times tend to be written, for the most part, from either of two perspectives. From a Jewish standpoint, the events of those centuries constitute nothing more than a series of troubling episodes, interspersed with some significant religious developments, in the unending history of the Jewish people that is already well into its fourth millennium. From a Christian perspective the period is of critical importance because it reflects the conditions and circumstances that mark the origins and emergence of the greatest of universal religions. In both cases, the focus is almost exclusively on developments within ancient Judaea. External factors tend to be brought into consideration only insofar as they contribute to an understanding of two major questions: What enabled the Jews to survive the destruction of their state and to create, out of its rubble, the seemingly indestructible edifice of Rabbinic Judaism; and what precipitated the crises that caused Christianity to arise at that particular time and facilitated its spread throughout the Roman world?

However, although there is historical value in both the typical Jewish and Christian approaches, neither alone contributes very much to an understanding of the *political* history of the period. A political history of ancient Israel in Roman times must try especially hard to avoid viewing events through an ideological prism. Thus, even though the primary subject of interest may be ancient Judaea, its history needs to be examined within the political context in which it existed. And that context is provided by the Hellenistic Ptolemaic and

Seleucid states that dominated the region in which Judaea struggled for survival, followed by that of the Roman empire that ultimately destroyed it.

The contemporary visitor to the ruins of the Forum in Rome can still see, among the several monuments that have survived the centuries intact, the Arch of Titus on the summit of the Via Sacra. The structure was built during the reign of Domitian (81–96), Titus' brother and successor as emperor, to commemorate the victory of Rome over Judaea in the year 70 C.E. The interior of the arch is decorated with two bas-reliefs: one showing Titus in his triumphal chariot, the other depicting the procession of Jewish captives carrying the spoils of the Temple of Jerusalem, the golden shewbread table, the seven-branched menorah and the silver trumpets. The legend on the arch acclaims Titus as "the first to destroy a city that before him all marshals, kings, and peoples had either besieged in vain or had not attacked at all."

The thoughtful observer cannot help but wonder what it was that made the Roman victory over Judaea so significant as to justify such a tribute to Titus, who was the commander of the legions that completed the conquest of Jerusalem and the suppression of the Jewish revolt. Rome, after all, was at the peak of its power at the time, with an empire encompassing much of western and all of southern and southeastern Europe, northern Africa, and Asia Minor, while Judaea represented nothing more than a speck on the map of the Roman world. If one turns to the classical literature of Rome for an explanation, the result will be disappointment. Although a handful of scattered references to Judaea, and some generally unfavorable comments about the Jews, may be found there, one will not find anything that will satisfactorily explain why crushing the Judaean mouse was so important to the Roman elephant.

It is the burden of this book to attempt to answer this question. It will be shown that, before the decline of the Roman Empire, many of its consuls, emperors, and other leaders had an intuitive grasp of grand strategy that seems to have escaped the historians and chroniclers of the Roman centuries. And it is within the context of grand strategy, that is, the coordination and direction of a nation's resources toward the achievement of a fundamental political goal, that Judaea became significant to Rome.

The implicit argument of this work is that the relationship between Rome and Judaea must be viewed in its geopolitical dimensions if its true nature is to be understood. That is, Judaea was not important to Rome because of the religion and culture of its people, whose general rejection of Roman culture and beliefs was an affront to the leaders of the mighty state. Its importance also had very little to do with anything that was to be found in the country, such as natural resources or other wealth. As far as Rome was concerned, Judaea's singular significance lay in its geopolitical position.

Judaea, or Palestine as the Romans later named the territory, was situated on the land bridge between Africa and Asia. This circumstance gave the small country a pivotal geopolitical role throughout the long and troubled history of the Fertile Crescent, the region stretching in an arc from Egypt to Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf. Because of its geographical position between them, Palestine was always an object of contention between the great powers of the ancient world that arose in Egypt and Mesopotamia. And, when Rome extended its sway in the east to Egypt in Africa, and Asia Minor (Anatolia) and Syria in Asia, Judaea became the link that connected the two, giving Rome undisputed control of the eastern Mediterranean and its coastal regions.

However, as will be seen, because of the unique character of its religion and culture, which bred an intense nationalism unknown elsewhere in the ancient world, Judaea turned out to be a weak link holding the Roman Empire in the east together. As such, it became a factor of some importance in the protracted struggle of the titans, Rome and Parthia, for hegemony in southwest Asia. Judaea thus took on a political and strategic significance that was grossly disproportionate to its size and made its subjugation and domination an imperative of Roman foreign policy for two centuries, from Pompeius to Hadrian. In effect, the history of the period may be viewed as the story of the conflict between Roman imperialism and Judaean nationalism.

Any attempt to present a cogent history of the approximately three hundred years of relations between Rome and Judaea will be hampered from the outset by a dearth of reliable source materials. The principle sources for the history of Judaea during this period, as well as its relations with Rome, are the works of Josephus Flavius. However, Josephus was a Judaean general who participated actively in the great revolt against Rome, and eventually capitulated to Vespasian, who not only spared his life but also subsequently employed him. For this reason Josephus was castigated by many of his colleagues as a traitor, and he wrote his histories, in part, to vindicate himself. Since he wrote his works while a client of Rome, there is a strong thread of apology that wends it way through these narratives and, as was once quipped, apology is history with a purpose and without a conscience.

As noted at the outset, the Roman historians generally have little to say about Judaea and are therefore of little help in reconstructing the relevant history of the events and relationships that are our interest here. Most studies of the period are reconstructions based in part on precious few bits of reliable information gleaned from such diverse sources as the Roman writers, the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, the New Testament, Philo of Alexandria, the Talmud and other traditional Jewish literature. The primary sources remain the works of Josephus, the reliability of which, at least in some matters, is con-

sidered highly contentious by scholars of the subject. Since we must rely on these same inadequate sources, this work is necessarily highly speculative, as are all works on the period, without exception.

However, it is my contention that approaching this material with a geopolitical perspective provides a means of infusing new significance into the available information. A geopolitical approach has the advantage of establishing a reasonably objective framework within which to array and examine discrete events and their likely meaning and significance. Thus, starting with Rome, about which we have a great deal of historical information, it is possible to infer its grand strategy in the east from an examination of its actions and policies. It is then a relatively easy matter to identify the role which the territory of Judaea logically plays within that strategic conception, just as other ancient states such as Commagene and Armenia are presumed to have played critically important geopolitical roles in the imperial scheme. With this framework in mind, one may proceed to examine particular events, at least from the Roman perspective, and determine whether they do or do not fit within it.

Since Rome is unquestionably the dominant player in this game of bilateral relations with Judaea, it is reasonable to suggest that Judaean actions will be largely, although by no means exclusively, in response to Roman initiatives. It is therefore possible to examine events in Judaea for a fit within the Roman strategic framework and in this manner proceed to reconstruct the history of the relationship in a reasonably coherent fashion. This is not to argue that the result necessarily will be an accurate reflection of how and why certain events took place, but it does afford a method of increasing the plausibility of the historical reconstruction.

Let us return to the question raised at the beginning of this introduction concerning the Arch of Titus. It would seem that Judaea's geopolitical position in the eastern Mediterranean made it sufficiently important to the emperor of Rome to merit the dedication of a major memorial to the suppression of a revolt in the small country. That revolt, if successful, would have driven a wedge between the northern and southern parts of the Roman Empire in the east, impairing its viability in view of the challenges facing it on its eastern frontiers.

The implication of this is that the logic of Roman imperial expansion in the Middle East required total control of the eastern Mediterranean and its littoral and that Judaea was an essential element in that scheme because of its geography. The fact that this could not be achieved without eliminating Judaean independence served to cause a renaissance of Judaean nationalism that culminated in a second war of national liberation some 60 years after the first, a war that Judaea could not win.

What follows, then, is a narrative of how these sweeping generalizations were reflected in the events that made up the history of the troubled relations between the superstate of Rome and the ministate of Judaea, perhaps the two most important influences on the subsequent history of the western world.

The narrative begins with a brief recapitulation of the history of Judaea from the days of Cyrus of Persia through the Macedonian conquest of the region and the subsequent entry of Rome into the area a century later. It will review the relations between Rome and the Seleucid empire and their consequences for the Jews of Palestine, which led to what is perhaps history's first instance of a war for national liberation, and the treaty relations that were established between the fledgling Judaean state and the Roman Republic. It then considers why and how the relationship between Judaea and Rome changed from one of alliance to one of intervention and conquest and how the internal power struggles within Judaea created a situation that made it easy for Rome to pursue its imperial policy of "divide and rule."

The work continues with an examination of how Judaea coped with its initial loss of political independence and how it was affected by the struggles for power in Rome itself. This is followed by a review of the circumstances under which the Romans decided to reestablish the kingdom of Judaea as a client state. The complex problems that arose as a consequence of the imperial ambitions of Cleopatra of Egypt, aided and abetted by the Roman ruler of the East, Marcus Antonius, are also explored. Next, it considers in some detail the twists and turns of Judaean palace politics and how they affected the character of Roman-Judaean relations during the reign of Augustus Caesar, followed by an examination of the turbulent period from 6–41 C.E. The resurgence of Judaean nationalism during the rule of the last Roman procurators and the circumstances that led to the outbreak of the great revolt in 66 are then examined. An attempt is made to explain why the nationalists believed they had any chance of success in a bid for independence against the power of Rome, notwithstanding the internal schisms that emerged among the nationalist factions. Consideration is also given to the fundamental question as to whether internal unity among the Judaeans would have made any substantial difference in the final outcome of the struggle, given the place of Judaea in the geopolitical framework of the Roman Empire.

Finally, it examines the aftermath of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in the year 70. Included in this is a consideration of the surprising failure of the overwhelming defeat suffered by the Judaeans to quell the spirit of Jewish nationalism which soon rose in revolt once again, this time not only in Judaea but throughout the Roman East, during the reign of Trajan. The reasons for these outbreaks, and their connection to the renewal of war between Rome and

Parthia are explored in some detail. The book concludes with a consideration of what precipitated the final outburst of Judaean nationalism in ancient times in the revolt of Bar-Kokhba against the Rome of Hadrian in 132. This was a revolt that completely defied all reason but which nonetheless was strongly supported by some of Judaea's most prominent and thoughtful religious authorities.

The period discussed in this book constitutes the formative period of both Rabbinic Judaism and early Christianity. Understanding the political forces that helped shape the circumstances under which they both developed will help to better understand why and when they became estranged and subsequently took rather different courses of historical development.

Chapter 1

The Historical Background

The special importance of the nation of Israel in the ancient world lay not only in its singular religion and culture, which spawned offshoots that have been at the center stage of world history for more than two millennia, but also in the unfortunate geographical position of its homeland. Situated on the land bridge between Africa and Asia, Palestine, as the land of Israel was to be called by the Romans later in its history, had served as the crossroads of conflict between the more powerful states that arose on its frontiers in Egypt and Syria since remote antiquity. After centuries of unrelenting turmoil in the region, the ancient Jewish states of Israel and Judah came to violent ends at the hands of the Assyrians and Babylonians in 721 and 586 B.C.E. respectively.

To facilitate their control of newly conquered territories, the Assyrians introduced the policy of population transfers. The elements of the defeated population that were primarily affected by this policy were those considered most likely to be potential troublemakers in the future. These included the political, social, and economic leader of the defeated nation, who were simply removed from the scene and resettled in small groups elsewhere in the empire, where they were generally permitted to rebuild their individual but not their communal lives. This policy was also applied by the Assyrians to the conquered northern kingdom of Israel, and the large numbers of those transferred simply disappeared from the stage of history as an identifiable ethnic and cultural group, presumably through a process of diffusion and assimilation about which we know virtually nothing. The Babylonians subsequently also applied

this policy of population transfers to the kingdom of Judah, and even larger numbers of the nation's leadership classes were sent into captivity in Mesopotamia. However, in this instance, many of the transferees were resettled in large concentrations and therefore were able to retain their national-religious-cultural identity.

With the defeat and conquest of Babylonia in 538 B.C.E. by Cyrus the Great of Persia, the situation of the Jewish community in exile took a remarkable turn for the better. Cyrus proved to be not only a brilliant general but also a shrewd statesman. He made it his policy to conspicuously demonstrate sensitivity to the religious and cultural traditions and practices of the different peoples who came under his rule. It also appears to have been part of his policy to exempt some temples from taxation, effectively granting economic privileges to the priestly class and thereby linking their wellbeing to their Persian overlords. These policies had the anticipated result of building a relatively high degree of loyalty to the Persian throne.

As successor to the throne of Babylonia and ruler of its empire, Cyrus also became master of Palestine, and it was from there that he planned to launch his invasion and conquest of Egypt. This presented the Persian monarch with the opportunity to further demonstrate his solicitous attitude toward the Jews within the context of a broader geopolitical purpose. Thus, during his first year on the throne at Babylon, Cyrus issued an edict authorizing the return of the Jews from their captivity in Mesopotamia to their ancient homeland, where they were to be permitted to rebuild their central national-religious institution, the sacred Temple in Jerusalem. This beneficence was surely expected to create a bond of loyalty to the house of Cyrus that would guarantee stability in Judaea, the Persian forward base on the Egyptian frontier.

In 537, a trickle of Jews, probably less than a thousand, left Mesopotamia under the leadership of Zerubbabel, a prince of the royal house of David, to return to the land of Israel. These were followed by a number of additional small waves of immigrants, which, over the next century, amounted to a total of about 42,000. There they joined with the decimated Judaean population that had survived in place to begin the rebuilding of their national life.

It is noteworthy that the returnees generally tended to avoid integrating with the Samaritans. These were an amalgam of the descendants of those from among the people of the former Kingdom of Israel who had not been forced into exile almost two hundred years earlier. Many of these Israelites appear to have intermarried with the diverse peoples transplanted by the Assyrians to replace their exiled countrymen. One consequence of this pattern of intermarriage appears to have been the emergence among the Samaritans of a syncretic form of religion that mixed the worship of the God of Israel with that of other

deities. This effectively transformed the monotheism of the biblical prophets into a polytheism that made their credentials as true Israelites somewhat questionable. Nonetheless, marriage between Jews and Samaritans was not uncommon, and Samaritans were permitted to participate in Judaean communal worship.

The reconstitution of the Jewish nation in Judaea was a long and complex process, which was made more difficult by the policies of the less enlightened rulers of Persia that succeeded Cyrus, who died in 529. Following the brief reign of his son and successor Cambyses, Persia underwent a period of internal convulsions that reverberated throughout the empire until Darius established his firm control in 519. It was during this period of instability that an upsurge in Jewish nationalist sentiment took place, leading many to believe that the hour of Israel's liberation from foreign rule and its political restoration were at hand. The prophets Haggai and Zechariah fueled this flame by urging the rapid reconstruction of the Temple of Jerusalem as the basis for the reestablishment of a Jewish state and the restoration of the Davidic monarchy. This was expected to take place under Zerubbabel, a descendant of the House of David who was already in place as governor of Judaea. Under their goading the Temple was rebuilt by 515, but by that time Zerubbabel appears to have disappeared without a trace. It seems likely that he was disposed of in some manner by Darius to quash any potential bid for Judaean independence. In any case, the dashed expectations led to a self-imposed suppression of Jewish nationalist sentiment for some three and a half centuries.

For the next 60 years, a number of Persian satraps governed Judaea. However, since the seat of the Persian administration in Judaea was in the northern part of the country, the high priest in Jerusalem was generally allowed to assume responsibility for local affairs. The satraps soon treated him, in effect, as the governor of Jerusalem. This relative political autonomy of the high priest clearly helped retain the general loyalty of the Judaean population to the Persian regime for as long as it continued in the country. Nonetheless, the Judaeans frequently suffered oppression by the satraps and attack by hostile neighbors, Samaritans in the north, Philistines in the west, Arabs in the south, and Ammonites in the east. Their plight was recorded by a contemporary prophet, designated as Deutero-Isaiah: "But this is a people robbed and spoiled, they are all of them snared in holes, and they are hid in prison-houses; they are for a prey, and none delivereth, for a spoil, and none saith: 'Restore'" (Isa. 42:22). It was to deal with these problems that Nehemiah, a trusted official of Artaxerxes I, pleaded for and received royal authorization to oversee the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, where he arrived in 445 B.C.E.

Nehemiah, who was appointed governor of Judaea, encountered strong opposition to his plans for strengthening Jerusalem. His principal opponents included Sanballat the Horonite, the governor of neighboring Samaria, and Tobiah the "Ammonite," a man of Judaean origin who represented the most influential landowning family in Ammon, both of whom did everything in their power to prevent the project from being completed. Sanballat had planned to subjugate Judaea and eventually to annex it, while Tobiah was not anxious to see anything alter the existing situation. Despite the systematic harassment of the workers by marauders, the wall encircling the city was completed in 52 days.

With Jerusalem secure from outside attack, Nehemiah proceeded to restructure the city internally, making it once again habitable for a large population after a hiatus of 150 years. At the same time, a number of important religious reforms also took place, one of the most politically significant of which was the rejection of intermarriage, which eventually was to cause serious problems between Judaeans and Samaritans. Jerusalem thus underwent both a cultural and religious revival, with the Temple once again becoming the political center of Judaea.

It was during the period of Nehemiah's term as governor that a crisis emerged in Judaea over the issue of intermarriage. A grandson of the high priest Eliashib had married the daughter of Sanballat the Horonite and apparently refused to divorce her, as demanded by Nehemiah. It seems likely that Sanballat had sanctioned the marriage in the first place as a means of achieving his political ambitions in Judaea through his son-in-law, when the latter succeeded to the high priesthood. This expectation was dashed when Nehemiah had him expelled from the Temple and banished from the city, nullifying his chance of ever becoming high priest in Jerusalem. This event was but one in a series that ultimately led to a schism, with the Samaritans breaking away from the religious domination of Jerusalem. At the same time, Nehemiah took steps to remove the influence of Tobiah, who had a private chancellery in the Temple, by evicting him as well. Nonetheless, the Tobiads would continue to play a major role in Judaean affairs.

For most of the century following the governorship of Nehemiah, Judaea was allowed a substantial degree of self-government, Persian demands on it being essentially limited to the payment of taxes, the provision of a levy for the imperial army, and the maintenance of peace in the territory. The governor of Judaea, who reported to the satrap of Syria at Damascus, was usually the high priest whose office achieved a new and higher status when the position was formally made hereditary. In effect, the high priest became the internally autonomous dynastic ruler of Judaea.

With a high priest at the helm of the government, the priesthood itself gradually replaced the remnants of the royal family as the aristocracy of the society, a development that resulted quite naturally from the wealth acquired as a consequence of their sacerdotal functions. First, there were the biblically ordained systems of tithes and the allocation of the first-born of all cattle, or a monetary equivalent, to the priests. There was also a requirement to pay a fee to the priests for their redemption of each first-born male, in addition to the in-kind fees that were an integral part of every animal sacrifice and meal offering. All of these assured a constant flow of income into the priestly coffers. Moreover, with a great number of Jews living in the Diaspora, mostly within the Persian Empire, the traditional obligation of an annual head tax for the upkeep of the Temple in Jerusalem assured a constant and substantial influx of income from abroad, all of it channeled to the priesthood. As a result, with access to the priesthood strictly limited to the descendants of Aaron in the male line, the priesthood became a self-perpetuating and economically dominant aristocracy that transformed the system of Judaean government into a *hierocracy*.

Toward the end of this period, the Persian king Darius III appointed Sanballat III to be governor of Samaria. And, almost exactly as had occurred several generations earlier with his ancestor Sanballat I, he gave his daughter in marriage to Manasseh, brother of Jaddua, the high priest in Jerusalem. When the religious authorities demanded that he dissolve the now forbidden marriage or forfeit his clerical rights in the Temple, Sanballat proposed to build a temple in Samaria that would rival the one in Jerusalem and to appoint Manasseh as its high priest. To counter this move, the Judaean religious authorities enacted a law which stated that, if a Judaean married a foreign woman, the child of such a union would not be considered a Judaean but would follow the status of the mother (this practice has been followed in traditional Judaism ever since in determining the status of a child born of a mixed marriage). Accordingly, the children of Manasseh not only could not serve as priests, they would not even be acknowledged as part of the people of Israel. It seems that Sanballat now reached the point where he was prepared, in effect, to establish a distinct Samaritan religious community with its own sanctuary to be built on Mount Gerizim in Samaria. However, he apparently was unable to obtain the necessary approval from the Persian court, presumably because of the influence of the Babylonian Jewish community, which was strenuously opposed to the idea. His plan was finally brought to fruition in the year 332 B.C.E., when the Persian Empire was disintegrating under the onslaught of the Macedonian armies of Alexander the Great, who authorized construction of the Samaritan temple. The resulting religious schism between the Samaritans

and the Jews, which has persisted to the present day, would become politically significant in the latter days of the Second Commonwealth and will be discussed at the appropriate point later on.

Alexander inflicted a decisive defeat on the Persians in 333 at the battle of Issus in Cilicia in Asia Minor, and his armies were then free to sweep southward to capture the Phoenician ports. These provided the bases for the still powerful Phoenician fleet, the mainstay of the Persian navy, and a constant threat to the maritime lines of communication in the region. By eliminating the Persian naval threat, Alexander would be free to reach his primary target, Egypt, which had chafed under the harsh rule of the Persian king Artaxerxes III Ochus and was prepared to welcome him with open arms. Alexander marched through Syria and Palestine, meeting with stubborn resistance only at Tyre and Gaza, which held out for seven and two months respectively.

Since the Jews had enjoyed a considerable degree of communal autonomy under Persian rule, it seems likely that Alexander continued that practice, consistent with the general policy of tolerance he adopted with regard to Egypt, Ionia, Lydia, and India. However, with his premature death only nine years later, the great conqueror's dream of a unified global empire died with him as his successors began a struggle for power that engulfed the region in raging conflicts for almost two centuries.

Under Alexander's successors, the Macedonian Empire began to split into four components: Macedonia and Greece came under the rule of Antipater and later his son Cassander; Thrace was taken over by Lysimachus; Babylonia, which under Alexander included Syria, eventually came under the domination of Seleucus; Egypt became the patrimony of the Lagids, the dynasty established by Ptolemy I Lagos.

Palestine once again became a strategic prize, this time in the struggle for regional dominance between the Macedonian Ptolemaic and Seleucid Empires, changing hands a number of times with the fortunes of war. "As Palestine had been in ancient Pharaonic days a debatable region between the power ruling in Mesopotamia and the power ruling in the Nile, so it was to be still, when the place of the old native kings had been taken by the two Macedonian houses."[1] Finally, in about 272 B.C.E., a peace agreement was reached between Ptolemy II Philadelphus of Egypt and the Seleucid king Antiochus I Soter that confirmed Egyptian control over Palestine, although this was to be contested repeatedly over the next several decades.

In the meanwhile, amid the chaos that gripped the region as a result of the virtually incessant warfare, the small Jewish enclave of Judaea underwent a series of internal convulsions that helped shape its subsequent history. Although indigenous political authority was nominally vested with the high priest, the

real power in Judaea rested with the Tobiads, the aristocratic family of Tobiah the "Ammonite," whose base was in southern Gilead in present-day Transjordan. Tobiah, the patriarch of the family in the period under consideration was the brother-in-law of the high priest Onias II. He evidently was also commander of a Ptolemaic military colony in the region of ancient Ammon and appears to have reported directly to Apollonius, the finance minister of Ptolemy Philadelphus.

When Ptolemy III Euergetes succeeded the latter in 246, the time seemed ripe for another attempt by the Seleucids to seize Palestine and Syria, and war broke out again between the two regional powers. Although it was not in their interest to take an active role in the conflict, there was a good deal of pro-Seleucid sentiment among the Jews of Palestine. For more than two centuries, from the rise of the Persian Empire to the death of Alexander, the Jews of Palestine and the majority of Jews in the Diaspora had been under a common rule and therefore were able to develop a number of close cultural and other ties. The Jews of Babylonia spoke a form of Aramaic that was similar to that spoken in Palestine. Moreover, as already indicated, the Temple had received much of its revenue from the Jewish communities of Babylonia and Persia and the pilgrimages from the East to the Temple, something that would be curtailed in the event of a decisive Egyptian victory. As a result, especially among the Temple aristocracy, who clearly stood to benefit from a Seleucid victory, there was a much deeper sense of connection to the Jews of the Seleucid Empire than to the Greek-speaking Jews of Egypt, who were fewer in number.

When the Seleucids seemed to be winning the war, the high priest Onias II decided to align with them, signaling his allegiance by refusing to pay the nominal annual tribute required of him by the Egyptian ruler. Onias persisted in this policy even after Ptolemy warned him that unless the tribute was paid he would reduce the status of Judaea to that of a military colony. The pro-Seleucid approach of Onias aroused some serious opposition from a number of people who feared retaliation by Ptolemy. Among the latter were the Tobiads, who had business connections with the Egyptian court and believed that the country would benefit more from a relationship with Egypt, which dominated the Mediterranean coast, than with distant inland Babylonia.

Because of the Tobiad opposition to his policy, Onias was effectively forced to relinquish political leadership of the Jews in favor of his nephew Joseph, the son of Tobiah, but he nonetheless continued to serve as high priest. This separated the religious and civil authority for the first time since the governorship of Nehemiah two centuries earlier and also confirmed the division of the Judaeans into two political camps, the pro-Ptolemaic and the pro-Seleucid. Joseph convened an assembly of community leaders and convinced them of the

need to reverse Onias' policy and to remain loyal to Ptolemy. He then went to Alexandria to assure the Egyptian king of the fealty of the Palestinian Jewish community. With funds borrowed from friends in Samaria, which he used for bribery, Joseph obtained a royal appointment to farm the taxes of Coele-Syria (the Greek name for the territory of the northern Jordan valley), Phoenicia, Judaea, and Samaria.

Joseph established a stable regime for Judaea, based on a pro-Ptolemaic policy, for some 20 years until his death. There then ensued a struggle over the succession, with his youngest son from a second marriage, Hyrcanus, being his favorite and heir apparent because of the good connections he had established with the Ptolemaic court. This was deeply resented by his older half-brothers and resulted in an irreparable split among the Tobiads, leading not only to internecine conflict but also to a shift of allegiances. Henceforth, because Hyrcanus was pro-Ptolemaic, Joseph's remaining sons aligned themselves with the pro-Seleucid faction headed by the high priest Simeon, the son of Onias II, effectively shifting Judaean support to Antiochus III "the Great," for which they paid heavily when the tide of battle shifted in favor of Egypt.

The virtually continuous power struggle among the Macedonian dynasties that emerged from the generals who succeeded Alexander had gone on for more than a century and it ultimately began to take its toll on the contenders. Egypt, under Ptolemy V Epiphanes, who was only five years old when he ascended the throne in 205 B.C.E., reached the point of exhaustion first. Sensing his opportunity, in the winter of 203–202 Antiochus III formed a fateful alliance with Philip V of Macedonia for the purpose of carving up the Ptolemaic Empire, except for Egypt itself, between them.

Under their arrangement, the Egyptian holdings in Syria and Palestine were to be allocated to Antiochus, and he launched a major attack in the spring of 202 to enforce his claim. Antiochus decisively defeated the Egyptians at the battle of Panium (Panias) in northern Palestine and brought the country into the Seleucid Empire in 198. Appreciative of the support rendered during the course of the campaign by the Jews, Antiochus exempted them from paying taxes for three years and granted them other privileges as well. The pro-Seleucid policy of the high priest and the Tobiads finally appeared to have paid off.

Nonetheless, the permanent status of Palestine remained unresolved by the treaty concluded between Antiochus and Ptolemy Epiphanes in 192. To seal the bargain, Antiochus gave his daughter Cleopatra in marriage to Ptolemy, with part of the revenues derived from Coele-Syria as her dowry. As a result, the territory continued to be claimed by both the Ptolemies and the Seleucids, the

latter contending that only the revenues were included in Cleopatra's dowry and not the land itself.

Although Antiochus evidently was not overly concerned about it at the time, his desire for territorial aggrandizement also had the unintended consequence of embroiling the Seleucids in a conflict with the great power that had recently emerged on the stage of history further west in the Mediterranean basin—Rome. This came about because Antiochus' ally Philip had made the mistake of siding with Carthage in its long and difficult conflict with Rome (the Second Punic War, 218–201) and had entered into an alliance with the Carthaginian commander Hannibal in 215. When the Carthaginians were defeated in the decisive battle at Zama in 202, Philip allowed Hannibal to take refuge in Macedonia. This, along with Philip's aggressive moves against Greece, supplemented by the new expansionist alliance with Antiochus, was sufficient to raise eyebrows at the Senate in Rome. The Roman leaders were uneasy about these developments, which were viewed by some as suggesting the strong possibility that Philip also harbored territorial ambitions in Italy, something that was quite unacceptable to them. Roman sensibilities were further bruised by an anti-Macedonian propaganda campaign that was being spread in Rome by other regional states such as Rhodes and Pergamon, which were at war with Philip and were therefore anxious to provoke a Roman intervention in the conflict on their behalf.

The Senate ultimately decided to deal with the perceived threat, regardless of whether it was real or imagined. A Roman force took the field against Philip and, in 197, inflicted a crushing defeat on the Macedonian army at Cynoscephalae, in Thessaly. Instead of coming to the assistance of his ally, Antiochus chose to exploit the opportunity presented by the Roman attack to advance his own interests in the Aegean region at Philip's expense. Although Rome looked askance at this Seleucid intrusion into the area, and despite the growing sentiment in the Senate for a war against Antiochus as well, nothing was done about it at the time.

Relations between Rome and the Seleucid Empire continued to deteriorate and soon reached a critical point when, on the advice of Hannibal who was now an adviser to the Seleucid king, Antiochus invaded Greece in 192 in the wake of the Roman withdrawal from that country. This was the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back and Rome declared war in 191, quickly driving the Seleucid forces out of Europe. It was not long before the Roman armies followed the retreating Antiochus and crossed into Asia Minor where, under the command of Lucius Cornelius Scipio, they decisively defeated the Seleucid army at Magnesia toward the end of 189. The following year, under the Peace of Apamea, Antiochus surrendered all of western Asia Minor, which now came

under Roman hegemony. Furthermore, he was required to pay an enormous annual indemnity for a dozen years, an amount that was calculated to seriously weaken the Seleucid Empire.

Antiochus, unwittingly to be sure, had drawn the Romans into Asia. From this point on, they would increasingly become involved in the affairs of the region that now constituted the eastern marches of their growing empire. One of the motive forces behind subsequent Seleucid policy would be the need to find the resources with which to satisfy the Roman demands for tribute. Since Antiochus had no legitimate means of generating the necessary levels of revenue, he, as well as his successors, resorted to plundering the temples of the various religions and cults that existed within the widespread Seleucid territories. This was done in recognition of the fact that the temples also served as secure depositories for their worshippers, particularly after the invention of coinage, much of the wealth of the empire being contained in their treasuries. It was in the course of his attempt to plunder the temple of Bel in Elam in 187 B.C.E., an act that touched off a rebellion, that Antiochus met his death. His successor Seleucus IV Philopator (187–175) was preoccupied throughout his entire reign with the problem of meeting the war-indemnity payments to Rome. It was for this purpose that he had his minister Heliodorus make an abortive attempt to seize the treasure of the Temple of the Judaeans in Jerusalem.

The once vast Seleucid Empire, that at one time reached from the frontiers of Central Asia to Europe, had been reduced to Syria (including Cilicia), Palestine, Mesopotamia, Babylonia, Media, and Persis. Moreover, it was on the verge of bankruptcy. Pressed by the rise of indigenous tribal powers in the east and by Rome in the west, Seleucus Philopator saw no realistic alternative to accepting the diminished state of the empire. It was his position in this regard that ultimately brought about his assassination by Heliodorus, who attempted to seize power while Seleucus' son and heir Demetrius was still being held as a hostage in Rome. However, Seleucus' younger brother Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–164) soon eliminated Heliodorus and seized the throne for himself.

In 170, Eulaeus and Lenaeus, the regents for the young Egyptian king Ptolemy VI Philometor, attempted to wrest control of Palestine from the weakened Seleucids. Their plans went awry, however, when Antiochus, who did not allow the Egyptian forces even to cross the Sinai desert, effectively blocked their invasion of Palestine. With its army decisively defeated and Egypt rendered virtually defenseless, Antiochus invaded and occupied the country for a short while. After he withdrew, he left a garrison at Pelusium in the eastern Nile delta to keep the door to the country open to him. Before long, a lingering crisis over the succession to the Egyptian throne flared up once again, and Antiochus re-

turned to Egypt in 168 with the intention of annexing the country and thereby preempting any prospective Roman intervention there. By this time, however, it was already too late.

In the summer of 168, Rome decisively defeated the Macedonian king Perseus at the battle of Pydna, thereby becoming free to concentrate on the extension of Roman power to the remainder of the eastern Mediterranean littoral, a policy that placed it on a direct collision course with Antiochus. The Senate took a dim view of Antiochus' proposed annexation of Egypt, seeing it as a potential threat to Roman interests in the region. Accordingly, a mission headed by Caius Popilius Laenas was dispatched to Egypt to demand Antiochus' prompt withdrawal from the country. The Roman consul confronted Antiochus at Eleusis, near Alexandria, and issued an ultimatum to the Seleucid ruler, demanding immediate compliance. Placed in a humiliating position from which he was unable to extricate himself, Antiochus was forced to acknowledge tacitly that Egypt had become a Roman protectorate and that his own Seleucid Empire was henceforth to be considered a client-state of Rome. According to the Roman historian Livy,

> Popilius handed him the tablets containing the decree of the senate in writing, and bade him read this first of all. On reading the decree, he said that he would call in his friends and consider what he should do; Popilius, in accordance with the usual harshness of his temper, drew a circle around the king with a rod that he carried in his hand, and said, "Before you step out of this circle, give me an answer which I may take back to the senate." After the king had hesitated a moment, struck dumb by so violent an order, he replied, "I shall do what the senate decrees." Only then did Popilius extend his hand to the king as to an ally and friend.[2]

Word of Antiochus' discomfiture at the hands of Rome soon precipitated an open civil conflict in Judaea between the pro-Ptolemaic and pro-Seleucid parties. The roots of this conflict lay in a dynastic struggle over control of the office of high priest, which once again served as the seat of communal government for the Judaeans.

When Antiochus mounted the Seleucid throne in 175, the office of high priest in Judaea was held by Onias III, who had run afoul of the powerful and ardently pro-Seleucid clan of the Tobiads. Onias had come to believe that the political and economic environment had changed to the extent that it was in Judaea's greater interest to shift its allegiance to Egypt. The turmoil in the Seleucid Empire, whose eastern provinces were no longer under Antiochus' control, made it difficult for pilgrims to travel to the Temple in Jerusalem or to send contributions for its upkeep as in the past. On the other hand, the Jewish community in Alexandria and elsewhere in Egypt had grown substantially in

both size and prosperity. Accordingly he thought the long-standing pro-Seleucid policy of the Tobiads was an anachronism that should be overturned.

The Tobiads saw this shift in Onias' political orientation as an opportunity to seize the high priesthood itself, since they claimed descent from the high priest Simeon I, which ostensibly qualified them for the office. Simon, son of Joseph, who was captain of the Temple, a senior position in the Temple hierarchy, had earlier become embroiled in a controversy with Onias, his cousin, over formal control of the Jerusalem market, which dominated the economic life of the city. This purely secular position had traditionally been assumed by the high priest, in his capacity of civic leader of the community, and continued to be held by Onias notwithstanding the separation of the clerical from the secular responsibilities of the high priest in the time of Joseph, son of Tobiah. Simon turned to Seleucus IV for support in this quarrel, advising the government that Onias had aligned himself with Hyrcanus, leader of the pro-Egyptian party. Although Onias was able to ride out the storm, the Tobiads continued to plot against him.

There was more at stake in this struggle than acquiring the perquisites of office. The country had undergone a significant transformation over the preceding century under the powerful influences of Hellenism and the economic development that accompanied it. Judaea was no longer merely a small agricultural province of the Persian Empire enjoying religious autonomy. Partly because of its bridge position between the Ptolemaic and Seleucid empires, and partly because of the dramatic growth of nearby Alexandria into the greatest city and port in the Mediterranean, Judaea had become a relatively economically advanced country. It also developed a growing commercial class whose wellbeing was linked to the Hellenistic world. This created a vast gap between the new aristocracy of wealth, typified by the Tobiads, and the overwhelming majority of the people whom Hellenism had barely touched and who remained loyal to their traditional religious culture and way of life.

The Tobiads had become thoroughly imbued with Hellenistic values and culture. They had become assimilated Jews who were prepared to abandon Judaism itself if it were required to achieve their economic goals for themselves and the society in which they lived. Under their hand, Jerusalem had become a prominent commercial city. However, it still suffered certain commercial disabilities in the Hellenistic world because it did not have the status of a Hellenistic city, as did its regional competitors such as Tyre, which had the privilege of coinage. It therefore became a goal of the Tobiads to capture the high priesthood, without which it would not be possible to introduce the sort of innova-

tions, such as the establishment of Greek-style gymnasia, that were necessary to achieve the desired status for Jerusalem.

Their opportunity to seize the reins of control came shortly after Antiochus IV seized the throne, and Onias went to visit the king in Antioch in about 175 B.C.E. In his absence, the Tobiads effectively seized control of the Temple and elevated Onias' brother Jason (Joshua) to the position of high priest. Unable to return to Jerusalem, Onias seems to have disappeared, some suggesting that he went to Egypt where he established a temple in Heliopolis, others suggesting that he may have been assassinated in Antioch. Under Jason, the Hellenization of Jerusalem proceeded apace, but not fast enough to satisfy the Tobiads who then decided to take the next step and have Jason deposed in favor of one of them. Their opportunity came three years later when Jason dispatched Menelaus (Onias), the brother of Simon, on a mission to Antioch where he was to deliver a sum of 440 talents of silver to Antiochus. Menelaus offered the king the additional amount of 300 talents in return for his own installation as high priest in Jason's place. Presumably he assured Antiochus that he would accelerate the pace of Hellenization of Judaea, making it a more reliable province in the increasingly unstable Seleucid Empire. Menelaus returned to Jerusalem with a military force sent by Antiochus and Jason fled into exile in Transjordan.

But, when Jason received word about Antiochus's forced submission to the Romans, and rumors abounded that the Seleucid king was dead, he quickly raised a force of a thousand men and seized Jerusalem, forcing the Tobiads to take refuge in the citadel. Then, in an act of supreme irony, Jason turned on his own supporters and massacred large numbers of those opposed to increased Hellenization. However, when he learned that Antiochus was alive and well, and heading for Jerusalem, Jason fled the city once again.

This internal struggle between the Tobiads and the Oniads threatened to undermine the Seleucid position in the country, which now had enhanced importance to Antiochus. With the establishment of a de facto Roman protectorate over Egypt, Palestine became the southern Seleucid frontier with the Roman zone of influence in the eastern Mediterranean. Antiochus decided that direct intervention in Judaea was necessary to secure his position in the country, and in 168 he sent an army of some 22,000 men under Apollonius to seize control of Jerusalem. To prevent any future challenge to Seleucid authority, Apollonius had the walls of Jerusalem razed leaving the city defenseless. Although Menelaus was reinstated as high priest, the Temple treasury was seized and a permanent Seleucid garrison was established in the city in a newly built and virtually impregnable fort, the Acra, an acropolis that remained in Seleucid hands until 141.

NOTES

1. Edwyn Bevan, *A History of Egypt under the Ptolemaic Dynasty*, p. 35.
2. *Livy*, 45.12.

Chapter 2

The Hasmonean Revolt

Antiochus was justifiably concerned about the traditional vulnerability of the land bridge to attack from the south and took steps to consolidate his position in Palestine against a resurgent Roman-backed Egypt. Since it was impractical to fortify the entire country, he needed to have assurance of the loyalty of its peoples. He sought to achieve this through the imposition of an essentially totalitarian regime as part of a broader bold but miscalculated attempt to weld together the diverse populations of his empire into a single people that would be inherently supportive of the Seleucid dynasty. This was to be accomplished by forcing the various peoples to abandon their distinctive cultures and religious practices in favor of a more homogeneous culture that was rooted in Greek civilization and Hellenic religion. Only in this way, he believed, would it be possible for him to resist the inexorable pressures that he was under from Rome, which appeared determined to bring the Seleucid state to its knees.

Having decided to pursue such a policy, Antiochus launched an intensive program of Hellenization and insisted upon the universal adoption of a common core religion, the worship of Zeus Olympius. In the pagan world, such a demand was not entirely unrealistic since it merely meant according special significance to one particular god out the many that existed in the polytheistic pantheon. However Antiochus could hardly comprehend that such a demand could be anathema to committed monotheists, given that the very notion of monotheism was alien to him.

In Judaea, where strong Hellenistic influences had taken root over the course of the preceding century, it seemed at first that the ground was well prepared for accommodation to Antiochus' "cultural revolution." There had long been an ongoing clash between the conservative advocates of traditional Judaism and the Hellenizers. The former sought to reject Greek religious and cultural influences entirely, whereas the latter believed that the infusion of Greek culture was necessary if the Jews were to keep up with the pace of change in the world about them. It was the Hellenizers who reportedly argued: "Come, let us make a covenant with the gentiles around us, because ever since we have kept ourselves separated from them we have suffered many evils."[1] Antiochus therefore sought to achieve his basic political objectives in Judaea by lending his support to the Hellenizers for the purpose of making them the dominant political and social force among the Jews. However, even the Hellenizers were divided among themselves over the degree of Hellenization that was acceptable within the framework of traditional Judaic religion and tradition, a fact that made the Hellenistic party significantly less radical than it appeared when contrasted with the traditionalists.

In carrying out his Hellenization program in Judaea, Antiochus undertook to eliminate those elements of religious practice that served most to differentiate the Jews from the Greeks. In accordance with the recommendations of his Hellenistic collaborators and advisers, he forbade the practice of circumcision, a rite that was essential to Judaism but which was repugnant to the Greeks, and outlawed the formal observance of the Sabbath. He also transformed the Temple in Jerusalem into a site dedicated to the worship of Zeus Olympius, placing a small pagan altar on top of the altar of burnt offering in the Holy of Holies of the Temple, an act of ultimate sacrilege as far as the traditionalists were concerned. The high priest Menelaus and the rest of the clergy ceased to officiate in the Temple at the end of 168/167 B.C.E. with the suspension of the traditional sacrificial rite. However, contrary to the opinion of Antiochus' advisers that these "reforms" could be enforced and eventually made acceptable to the majority of the Jews, they soon precipitated an open rebellion that undermined and ultimately destroyed the Seleucid position in the country.

The attempt to enforce these restrictive decrees met with strong opposition. This provoked the Seleucid authorities into launching a violent campaign of religious persecution that had the unanticipated consequence of intensifying rather than reducing Jewish resistance. Initially, the nature of this Jewish resistance was generally passive, reflecting a fatalistic outlook on the history of the nation. It was a commonly held view that the loss of Jewish independence in antiquity was the result of failure to observe God's will. Thus, the alien authorities imposed on the Jewish people were serving as divine instruments for the

punishment of their collective transgressions. Since the Seleucid oppression was seen as a continuation of the expression of divine wrath against the children of Israel, the idea of active opposition to the foreign rulers was considered inconsistent with acceptance of the validity of the divine judgment.

The problem, however, was that the Seleucid decrees prohibited fulfillment of God's specific instructions as reflected in the Mosaic Law. Faced by this awesome contradiction, many of those who were most religiously committed concluded that the only option open to them, as indicated above, was passive resistance. That is, they would obey the commands of the Mosaic Law even though it was forbidden by the alien authorities, but would not resist when the latter sought to punish them for such defiance. In contemporary terms, we would describe this approach as civil disobedience. At the time, however, such civil disobedience meant martyrdom as a practical matter. Nonetheless, those who chose this path saw it as the only way they could be obedient to God's commandments without opposing His judgment of continuing punishment for the sins of their ancestors. As a result, religious martyrdom became commonplace.

At the same time, the idea of passive resistance and martyrdom appeared to other equally committed religious leaders as an inappropriate response to the immediate challenges faced by the Jews. Since it was virtually inconceivable that the majority of the people would choose martyrdom, there was a real likelihood that after the religious leaders were all killed the rest of the people would succumb to the Seleucid pressure and abandon the faith of their ancestors. Consequently, Mattathias, the aged patriarch of the Hasmoneans, a minor clan of priests that had fled from Jerusalem to the small town of Modiin, adopted a rather different approach to the problem. He proclaimed the radical thesis that the extreme adversity that was being pressed upon the Jews by Antiochus was not necessarily a result of God's desire to inflict punishment on Israel. Antiochus, it was suggested, might actually be acting out of his own arrogance rather than God's will; and, if this were the case, God would surely permit the Jews not only to disobey Antiochus' commands but also to actively oppose them.[2] Pursuing the logic of this argument, Mattathias soon inspired a revolt against the Seleucids under the leadership of his family, the Hasmoneans.

The insurrection began as an internecine struggle against the Jewish Hellenizers, whom the Hasmoneans considered as traitors to both God and the Jewish people. Subsequently, when the authorities attempted to suppress the movement, Mattathias raised the standard of revolt and took to the mountains with his five sons and their followers to conduct a guerrilla war against the Seleucids and those who collaborated with them. Starting as a reaction against attempted control of Judaean religious life, the revolt soon became trans-

formed into a struggle for complete communal autonomy. The Hasmoneans systematically undermined Antiochus' authority in the countryside and gradually reduced the areas under effective Seleucid control.

With the death of Mattathias in 165, leadership of the revolt passed to his son Judah, known as "the Maccabee." Under Judah, the struggle for Judaean autonomy took on more significant political dimensions, as the scope and intensity of Hasmonean military operations increased dramatically. The effectiveness of Judah's campaign was bolstered coincidentally by Rome's policy of draining the strength of the Seleucids. The debt burden resulting from Rome's heavy demands for tribute, in addition to the large expenditures Antiochus incurred in purchasing the loyalty of his soldiers, left his treasury on the brink of bankruptcy. He thus was forced to undertake a campaign in Persis, far to the east, to raise additional revenues. Seriously underestimating the military capabilities of the Judaeans, Antiochus took half his army with him on this campaign, leaving inadequate forces in Syria to deal with the threat in the south. As a consequence, the Hasmoneans were able to demolish a large Seleucid force organized by Seron, the governor of Syria, in a battle at Beth Horon. Judah and his men returned victorious to Jerusalem, cleansed the Temple and restored the rites there, according to tradition, three years to the day after they had been made to cease. The occasion was marked by the addition of a permanent commemorative festival, Hannukah, to the Jewish calendar.

After learning of the debacle that took place during his absence, Antiochus reportedly instructed his lieutenant, Lysias, to undertake a punitive expedition against Judaea. He was "to send against them a force to wipe out and destroy the strength of Israel and the remnant of Jerusalem and erase their memory from the area, settling foreigners throughout their territory and giving out their land in allotments."[3] Antiochus, who simultaneously had to deal with a revolt of the Parthians in Babylonia was thus led to further divide his already weakened forces. Although Lysias dispatched two successive expeditionary forces to Judaea, the first consisting of some 40,000 infantry and 7,000 cavalry, and the second of 60,000 infantry and 5,000 cavalry, both were defeated. However, the defeats were not decisive, and it seems likely that it was primarily internal Seleucid political considerations that prevented Lysias from continuing the campaign to a possibly successful conclusion.

It appears that Antiochus, learning of the defeats suffered by Lysias in Palestine, decided to abandon his campaigns in the east and to return to Syria to deal with the Judaean revolt personally. However, he never got the opportunity, dying en route to Antioch in late 164. His nine-year old son, Antiochus V Eupator, who had been left in the care of Lysias, succeeded him. On his death-bed, however, the king designated one of his generals, Philip, to serve as

regent for the lad, thereby creating some uncertainty as to who, Lysias or Philip, was supposed to be in charge of the empire.

Preoccupied with the ensuing power struggle in Syria, Lysias offered some concessions to the Judaeans in the hope of bringing their insurrection to an end, and thereby freeing his forces for other purposes. The concessions, however, were apparently too few and too late to have the desired effect. As the revolt continued and increasingly took on the dimensions of a full-scale war, the political ramifications of the conflict began to engage the attention of Rome, which as a matter of policy sought to keep the Seleucid Empire in a state of political disarray. The death of Antiochus IV, whom Rome saw as determined to prevent its further penetration of the eastern Mediterranean littoral, coupled with the apparently successful revolt in Judaea, renewed Roman interest in the region.

Up to this point, the Roman positions in the region were confined to Egypt in the south and Asia Minor in the north, two territories that were separated from each other by Seleucid Syria and Palestine. However, if the Judaeans were to succeed in attaining independent control of the African-Asian land bridge, a Roman-Judaean alliance could prove to be of considerable strategic value to Rome. At the same time, Roman support of their cause might prove invaluable for the Hasmoneans in fending off the numerically superior Seleucids. Thus, as suggested by one writer, "The pressure of Roman policy upon Antiochus was the indirect cause of the Jewish revolt, and the immediate cause of the king's inability to suppress it."[4]

According to one ancient source, the Romans offered to intercede with the Seleucids on behalf of the Jews. The Roman envoys Quintus Memmius and Titus Manlius are reported to have sent a message to the Council of Elders in Jerusalem advising them that, "As for the concessions granted you by Lysias the Kinsman of the King, we endorse them. As regards the points he decided to refer to the king, send someone immediately after you have considered them, so that we may present our views as befits your interests, for we are now on our way to Antioch. Accordingly, make haste to send representatives, so that we may know what your views are."[5] Although the authenticity of this communication is still a matter of scholarly controversy, it seems quite consistent with Roman practice. During this period, Roman embassies were dispatched throughout the region with the intent of ultimately extending Roman influence and intervening in regional political affairs wherever possible.

It is not known whether the council acted upon the Roman offer at the time. If it did, it does not appear to have produced anything of more than momentary consequence since a large Seleucid army under Lysias laid siege to Jerusalem in 162. Although it seemed quite likely that the city would fall, other more

significant political considerations caused Lysias to take steps to bring the campaign to an immediate end. He had received reports that the imperial regent, Philip, was returning to Antioch with a large force and intended to seize complete control of the Seleucid state. This led Lysias to convince the young Antiochus, who was in his charge, to agree to the complete termination of the Hellenization program in Judaea and to the restoration of religious freedom to the Jews. The prompt implementation of these steps, which met the most basic of the rebel demands, soon brought about the capitulation of the Judaean forces in Jerusalem as the insurrection ground to a standstill.

Shortly after these events, Antiochus Eupator was deposed by his cousin Demetrius I Soter, who had been held hostage in Rome but who escaped, or had been permitted to escape by some members of the Senate for internal political reasons, and who now seized the Seleucid throne for himself. The Senate registered its dissatisfaction over these developments by hesitating to acknowledge Demetrius' legitimacy, presumably expecting that this might encourage domestic opposition to his rule. In Judaea, however, Demetrius continued the new policies of his predecessor and it appeared that popular support for the revolt had come to an end.

The religiously zealous elements in the country, led by the *Hasidim* (Pious Ones) who had been ardent supporters of the Hasmoneans, were now satisfied by the restoration of their freedom of worship and withdrew their support of the insurrection. They, as well as the majority of the people, were quite prepared to accept continued alien political domination as long as it did not interfere with their religious autonomy. The Hasmoneans and their loyalists, on the other hand, came to feel that the struggle against the Seleucids was ultimately national in character and had therefore wrought a new political reality. They were prepared to settle for nothing less than complete national political independence. However, there was little that they could do without popular support, so they withdrew to the hills once again to await an opportunity to continue the national struggle.

Had Demetrius used better judgment, the revolt might have been put to rest permanently. But this was not to be the case. Although the Hasidim had originally accepted the high priest Alcimus, who had been appointed by Demetrius as the formal indigenous head of Judaea, his injudicious behavior, particularly his involvement in the execution of some 60 of the Hasidim, soon drove them back to the Hasmoneans. With their support, Judah took up arms against the Seleucids once again. Alcimus was forced to flee from Jerusalem, and the army that Demetrius sent under Nicanor to restore Seleucid authority in Judaea was defeated.

Judah was astute enough to know that Demetrius, who was struggling to keep the Seleucid empire from further disintegration, could not allow Judaea, a country so close to the center of the empire at Antioch, to secede without a major struggle. Moreover, Judah feared that in such a protracted conflict the relatively small Jewish community would eventually be overwhelmed. What Judaea desperately needed was the support of a major countervailing power such as Rome to offset the Seleucids as well as to guarantee Judaea's survival as an autonomous political entity. Aware that the strained relations between Demetrius and Rome could be exploited to Judaea's advantage, Judah took the initiative and sent two representatives, Eupolemos and Jason, to Rome in 161 B.C.E. to seek its support for the Judaean struggle against the Seleucids.

The Judaean embassy was welcomed in Rome, which was delighted with the opportunity of further weakening the Seleucid position in accordance with its general policy of "divide and rule." Demetrius' intentions and ambitions in the region were not clear, and there was some concern that he might attempt to reach an accommodation with Egypt that could prove incompatible with Rome's dominant position in the eastern Mediterranean. "It was clearly in the interests of Rome that an independent nation should separate the Syrian and Egyptian monarchies, and form a barrier to any union of their forces hostile to the Republic."[6] Accordingly, the Senate accepted the proposal of an alliance between Rome and Judaea. The text of the treaty that was agreed to, according to the chronicle of the Maccabees, is reflected in the following letter sent by Rome to Jerusalem in confirmation of the pact.

> Forever may there be peace between the Romans and the nation of the Jews on sea and land. May sword and enmity be far from them. If any aggressor wages war upon the Romans or upon any of their allies throughout their empire, the nation of the Jews shall give aid wholeheartedly, as circumstances indicate, and to those at war with them the Jews shall not give or supply food, arms, money, or ships, as was agreed at Rome. In the same manner, if any aggressor wages war upon the nation of the Jews, the Romans shall give aid wholeheartedly, as circumstances indicate, and to those at war with them there shall not be given food, arms, money, or ships, as was agreed at Rome. The Romans shall carry out these obligations without deceit. On the foregoing terms have the Romans made a treaty with the Jewish People. If hereafter both sides shall agree to add or subtract anything, they shall act according to their decision, and any such addition or subtraction shall be valid. As for the misdeed which King Demetrius is perpetrating against you, we have written as follows: "Why have you made your yoke weigh heavy upon our friends, our allies, the Jews? If they make any further complaint against you, we shall get justice for them by waging war on you by sea and by land."[7]

The treaty was essentially a mutual security and assistance pact, with the usual escape clause, in this instance, "as circumstances indicate." Nonetheless,

in accordance with its terms, Rome obligated itself to come to Judaea's aid in the event of a Seleucid attack, which was to take place before long.

While the negotiations over the treaty were underway in Rome, a new Seleucid army under Bacchides invaded Judaea in 161. In the ensuing conflict Judah was killed and Judaea was subjugated once more. The surviving Hasmoneans took to the hills once again to rebuild their forces for a renewal of the struggle at some future time. There is no evidence that Rome actually ever did anything tangible to fulfil its treaty commitments or even demonstrate its support of the Hasmonean struggle. It seems most likely that the Senate simply ignored the treaty it had just concluded once it became apparent, following the untimely death of Judah, that there was no clearly identifiable center of Judaean political authority to which it could relate. Although the leadership of the rebellion now passed to Judah's brother Jonathan, he evidently did not have the same stature as Judah and was forced to take to the hills with the remnants of his followers. If this was the reason for Roman inaction, it proved to be a prudent political judgment since, by 156, Jonathan himself had become tired of living as a homeless brigand and came to terms with the Seleucid government. He settled in the small town of Michmash with his followers and, over the next several years, consolidated his power and influence among the majority of the people who were basically opposed to the Hellenizing high priests who had been put in office for their own purposes by the Seleucids.

NOTES

1. *1 Maccabees* 1:11.
2. See Jonathan A. Goldstein, "Even the Righteous Can Perish by His Faith."
3. *1 Maccabees* 3:35–36.
4. William D. Morrison, *The Jews Under Roman Rule*, p. 8.
5. *2 Maccabees* 11:35–37. See discussions of authenticity on pp. 422–26 of the Goldstein edition.
6. Morrison, *The Jews Under Roman Rule*, p. 11.
7. *1 Maccabees* 8:23–32.

Chapter 3

A Jewish State Is Born

Although the Romans never honored their agreement with Judaea, they nonetheless contributed to the Judaean cause in other less direct but significant ways. Roman policy was to weaken the Seleucids at every possible opportunity, and this hastened the relaxation of the Seleucid grip on the Jews. Thus, in 152 B.C.E. Rome and its allies, Egypt, Cappadocia, and Pergamon, gave their support to Alexander Balas, a man of unknown origin who pretended to be a son of Antiochus Epiphanes and laid claim to the Seleucid throne. He landed at Ptolemais (Acre), and its garrison went over to him. Roman recognition of Alexander made it virtually impossible for Demetrius to recruit troops for his army from the immediate region, and he needed to augment his forces at once to meet the challenge to his reign.

Under the circumstances, Demetrius turned to the Judaeans for assistance. However, following the death of the Judaean high priest Alcimus in 159, Demetrius had failed to appoint another in his place. He now found that he had no Judaean establishment political figure to turn to who could mobilize the forces he sought. Accordingly, he had little choice but to turn to Jonathan the Hasmonean, who seemed to be the only identifiable leader that he could find who still commanded some authority among the Jews. He authorized Jonathan to recruit an army, and Jonathan exploited the opportunity to seize control of Jerusalem.

To counter Demetrius' ploy, Alexander Balas also turned to Jonathan, making a more attractive offer to him in exchange for his allegiance. Alexander

promised to appoint Jonathan as high priest if his challenge to Demetrius was successful. Jonathan accepted and honored his agreement with Alexander even when placed under heavy pressure by Demetrius. Alexander, too, kept his word; and, when Demetrius was overthrown in 151, Jonathan became the civil and military governor of Judaea, effectively transforming the Seleucid province into an autonomous vassal state.

However, the reign of Alexander Balas was not destined to last for very long. In 147, Demetrius II Nicator, the son and legitimate heir of Demetrius I, laid claim to the Seleucid throne. Alexander's position was completely undermined when his father-in-law, Ptolemy VI of Egypt, turned against him, retrieved his daughter Cleopatra and gave her to Demetrius II as his wife. Although Jonathan remained faithful to Alexander to the end, he could not prevent the latter's assassination in 145.

Sensing the relative weakness of the Seleucid regime, Jonathan amassed sufficient power to place the Acra in Jerusalem under siege, and was able to extract significant concessions from Demetrius II as the price of lifting it. These included Judaean freedom from taxation other than the annual tribute of 300 talents, and the annexation of three districts in Samaria. Jonathan now shifted his loyalty to Demetrius and came to his aid when a rebellion broke out in Antioch that was precipitated by Tryphon, a former general of Alexander Balas who produced a son of the latter, Antiochus VI, as claimant to the throne. Jonathan dispatched some 3,000 Judaean troops to Antioch and succeeded in rescuing Demetrius from virtually certain death at the hands of the rebels.

However, when Demetrius subsequently defaulted on his commitments to Jonathan, the latter shifted his support to Tryphon and Antiochus VI in 144 and took the field against Demetrius, defeating one of his armies at Hazor in the Galilee. Jonathan also subjugated the territory of Philistia on behalf of his new allies, and prevented the forces of Demetrius from consolidating at Hamath on the Orontes in western Syria. Nonetheless, there was little trust between Jonathan and Tryphon. Their alliance against Demetrius did not have common objectives and was destined to come apart as soon as it served Tryphon's purpose.

Despite these problems, Jonathan had come to appreciate what might be accomplished through astute diplomacy coupled with the judicious use of military force. After all, he had achieved more through a single diplomatic step than through years of guerrilla warfare. Before long he dispatched another embassy to Rome in an effort to negotiate a new alliance that would guarantee Judaean independence. However, nothing was to come of this initiative at the time. While negotiations were under way with the Senate in 142, Jonathan was

betrayed and subsequently executed by Tryphon, who soon assassinated Antiochus VI as well and made himself king of Syria.

With Jonathan's death, the leadership of the Judaeans passed to his older brother Simon who was at the time military governor of the coastal districts from Tyre to the Egyptian frontier. Simon continued building the fortifications started by his brother and forced the Seleucid troops in the Acra to capitulate, thereby placing all of Jerusalem under Judaean control for the first time since the beginning of the revolt.

Simon also offered to assist Demetrius II in defeating Tryphon in return for his acknowledgment of the political independence of Judaea and the renunciation of all claims for the payment of tribute. Demetrius, who was under heavy military pressure from Tryphon and desperately needed whatever help he could get from Simon, agreed to these terms. Thus, in 142, Judaea became an independent state, with Simon subsequently being proclaimed as its high priest and ethnarch in September of the following year. Tradition dictated that kingship in Israel was the exclusive province of the House of David, and at this point it was premature for Simon to attempt to arrogate the monarchy for the non-Davidic Hasmoneans. Therefore, although he was a king in every sense except for the name, Simon was content to be accorded the lesser dignity of prince of his people.

Like his predecessors, Simon placed little credence in the trustworthiness of the kings of Syria and also sought to obtain the backing of Rome as a counterweight to any change of heart that might take place in Antioch. He sent an envoy to Rome named Numenius, who succeeded in getting the Senate to renew its earlier treaty with the Hasmoneans. A letter (the authenticity of which is a matter of scholarly contention) signed by the consul Lucius was sent from Rome to Demetrius, Ptolemy VIII of Egypt, Attalus II of Pergamon, Ariarathes V of Cappadocia, Mithridates I of Parthia, and other rulers in the region, stating, "Ambassadors of our friends and allies the Jews, commissioned by the High Priest Simon and by the People of the Jews, came to us to renew their longstanding relations of friendship and alliance. . . . Accordingly, we resolved to write to you kings and countries to refrain from attempting to harm them and from making war upon them, their towns, and their territory and from acting in alliance with those at war with them."[1]

Once again, Roman recognition of Judaea as a free state was intended serve Rome's foreign policy by further weakening the Seleucids, thereby preparing the ground for a possible Roman expansion into the region at a later date. Aside from whatever psychological benefit they may have provided for the Judaeans, the letters had little if any other tangible political significance. As pointed out by the Roman historian Justinus, it cost the Romans nothing and therefore was

not worth much more than that. "When they [the Jews] revolted against Demetrius they were the first people of the East that recovered their liberty by having recourse to the friendship of the Romans, who bestowed not unwillingly what was none of their own."[2]

Simon was soon to learn that Roman assurances were as unreliable as those of the Seleucids. By the time that the letter reached Antioch, Demetrius most likely had already been taken captive by the Parthians who held him prisoner for 12 years. His brother Antiochus VII Sidetes replaced him on the throne in 141 and reconfirmed the accords that Demetrius had entered into, at least for as long as he was preoccupied in dealing with the threat to the throne from Tryphon. However, no sooner had he disposed of the latter than he repudiated the agreements with Simon. He demanded that Simon abandon all those territories outside the confines of Judaea proper that had come under his control, particularly Joppa and Gazara, which linked Jerusalem to the sea. He also insisted that the citadel in Jerusalem be turned over to Seleucid troops. If Simon was unwilling to comply with these demands, then he was to compensate Antiochus with a payment of 1,000 talents of silver as reparations for the losses of revenues to the Seleucid state that resulted from the Judaean occupation of the territories and cities in question.

Simon rejected Antiochus' demands out of hand, asserting, "We have not taken land that is not ours nor have we conquered anything that belongs to others. Rather, we have taken our ancestral heritage which had been unjustly conquered by our enemies using one opportunity or another. Now we, seizing our opportunity, lay claim to our ancestral heritage."[3] Nonetheless, Simon agreed to pay 100 talents in return for Seleucid recognition of his claims. Antiochus rejected this offer and sent an army into Palestine to enforce his demands.

The Seleucid invasion was a clear act of aggression that should have brought Roman intervention, in accordance with the existing mutual security and assistance treaty with Judaea. However, Rome did not intervene to halt the invasion, nor did it do anything to alleviate Judaea's distress. As it turned out, the Judaean forces, under the leadership of Simon's sons John Hyrcanus and Judah, succeeded in defeating the invaders without external assistance.

With Simon's assassination along with his sons Mattathias and Judah in 134 B.C.E. at the hands of his overly ambitious son-in-law Ptolemy, whom he had made military commander of the Jericho region, his remaining son John Hyrcanus became high priest and head of state in Judaea. John Hyrcanus (134–104) was soon confronted by a new challenge from Antiochus Sidetes, who was not prepared to rest until his demands for tribute were met. Judaea was invaded a second time and much of its populace was forced to take shelter

within the walls of Jerusalem, which Antiochus placed under siege after he seized the coastal region. Hard-pressed by the lack of adequate food supplies for the swelled numbers of people in the city, John Hyrcanus had little choice other than to sue for peace. The terms eventually agreed to in 134 required the surrender of Judaean arms, the delivery of hostages, and the payment of 500 talents in lieu of the deployment of a Syrian garrison in Jerusalem. In addition, an annual tribute was to be paid for all territories that Antiochus considered part of Syria.

Given the circumstances that compelled John Hyrcanus to capitulate, the relatively mild peace terms imposed by Antiochus reflected his own need for a rapprochement with the Judaeans. Since he was at war with the Parthians in the east at the time, he needed to secure his rear from attack. He was also concerned that the imposition of harsh terms might unnecessarily antagonize Rome. Although the latter had never intervened directly on behalf of the Judaeans in the past, there did exist a longstanding treaty of alliance that permitted them to do so whenever they considered such a step to be appropriate. Presumably, if it served Rome's interests it would be found to be appropriate.

John Hyrcanus was determined to repudiate the treaty, which he had agreed to under duress, at the first opportunity. But it was obvious that in order to reconquer the coast, which was essential if he was to link Jerusalem to the sea, he would have to mobilize an army that could challenge the Seleucid cavalry in battle on the open plains. However, his Judaean irregulars were most effective in the hill country where there was little room for maneuver and cavalry would be at a disadvantage. What he needed was a professional army, and that meant recruiting foreign mercenaries. That, in turn, required money, of which he had little. Accordingly, it was reported that he had gone so far as to open David's tomb and to plunder the treasures that allegedly were hidden there. In any case, he proceeded to recruit a mercenary army which, augmented by his Judaean levies, gave him a formidable force. His opportunity to find employment for it came within a few years following the death of Antiochus Sidetes in 129 B.C.E.

Confronted by a serious challenge from Antiochus Sidetes, who had attacked Parthia with several powerful armies and had inflicted a number of significant defeats on their forces, the Parthians deliberately released Demetrius II from his long captivity to challenge his brother Antiochus for the Seleucid throne. A power struggle ensued that threw the entire empire into a state of disarray. This brought about a reversal of the situation on the battlefield and led to the death of Antiochus and the seizure of power by Demetrius. The situation of the Seleucids then became even more tenuous as a consequence of a war that broke out at the time between Demetrius and Ptolemy VII Physcon of Egypt.

To create additional chaos in the Seleucid realm, the Egyptian king set up another pretender to the Syrian throne, Alexander Zabinas, who succeeded in defeating Demetrius at Damascus in 125, and was in his turn soon to be challenged and executed by Antiochus VIII Grypus (125–113, 111–96) around 122. Within a short time his cousin Antiochus IX Cyzicenus (113–111, 111–95), the son of Antiochus Sidetes, challenged Antiochus Grypus and drove him out of office in 113. Antiochus Grypus regained control of Syria two years later, except for the territory of Coele-Syria which remained in the hands of Antiochus Cyzenicus until his death in 95.

The Judaean ruler John Hyrcanus soon was able to take advantage of the confusion and the virtual power vacuum that had been created in the immediate region. He not only repudiated the terms of the settlement imposed on him by Antiochus Sidetes but also expanded the borders of the Judaean state to include Idumaea and Samaria. The conquest of these two territories had significant effects on the subsequent history of Judaea. John Hyrcanus forcibly imposed Judaism on the Idumaeans, thereby making their subsequent adherence to the faith suspect in the eyes of many Judaeans. This was to have dramatic political ramifications later when, with the help of Rome, Herod the Idumaean became king of Judaea. Moreover, during the conquest of Samaria, the temple of the Samaritans on Mount Gerizim was destroyed. This created an unbridgeable gulf between the Judaeans and Samaritans that had seriously disruptive effects on the geopolitical coherence of the Judaean state over the next two centuries.

As a potential counter to any Seleucid attempts to reassert control of the territories he had conquered, John Hyrcanus also sent an embassy to Rome to seek reconfirmation of the Roman-Judaean alliance as well as Senate recognition of Judaea's territorial expansion. The Romans, however, were understandably ambivalent about the matter. On the one hand, they were pleased to do what they could to bolster Judaean confidence, which could only create further difficulties for the Seleucids and was consistent with Rome's foreign policy. On the other hand, the Senate was reluctant to commit itself to an acknowledgment of the legitimacy of Judaean territorial claims, since this might conflict at some point with Rome's evolving interests in the region. Accordingly, they obfuscated. The friendship agreement they concluded was worded, somewhat awkwardly, as reported by Josephus:

> Fanius, the son of Marcus, the praetor, gathered the senate together. . . . The occasion was, that the ambassadors sent by the people of the Jews, Simon the son of Dositheus, and Apollonius the son of Alexander, and Diodorus the son of Jason, who were good and virtuous men, had somewhat to propose about the league of friendship and mutual assistance which subsisted between them and the Romans, and about other public

affairs, who desired that Joppa, and the havens, and Gazara, and the springs and the several other cities and countries of theirs, which Antiochus had taken from them in the war, contrary to the decree of the senate, might be restored to them; and that it might not be lawful for the king's troops to pass through their country, and the countries of those that are subject to them: and that what attempts Antiochus had made during that war, without the decree of the senate, might be made void: and that they [the Romans] would send ambassadors, who should take care that restitution be made them of what Antiochus had taken from them, and that they should make an estimate of the country that had been laid waste in the war: and that they [the Romans] would grant them letters of protection to the kings and free people, in order to their quiet return home. It was therefore decreed as to these points, to renew their league of friendship and mutual assistance with these good men, and who were sent by a good and friendly people.[4]

In other words, the Romans merely implicitly acknowledged the Judaean claims without expressly indicating that Rome recognized them as legitimate. Moreover, when the Judaean ambassadors asked for the "letters of protection" mentioned in the document, they were told that the Senate would consider their request when its agenda permitted. Once again, the great power guarantee explicitly provided for by the treaty of "friendship and mutual assistance" was less than completely reassuring. As such, it was far from certain what deterrent effect the Senate decree would have on the Seleucids.

The test of Rome's commitment to Judaea came several years later, when John Hyrcanus tried to have Idumaean colonists settle in parts of Samaria. The Samaritans objected vehemently to this step and in 113 B.C.E. they appealed for help from Antiochus IX Cyzicenus, the king of the Seleucid state, which had by now been reduced in size to Syria alone. Antiochus welcomed the invitation to intervene and soon invaded Judaea, capturing several coastal towns including Joppa, places that implicitly had been acknowledged as Judaean by the Senate.

John Hyrcanus used the occasion to send envoys to Rome to register a complaint against the Syrian ruler. In response, the Senate duly issued another decree in 112, this time demanding "that Antiochus the king, the son of Antiochus, should do no injury to the Jews, the confederates of the Romans; and that the fortresses and the havens, and the country, and whatever else he had taken from them, should be restored to them . . . and that, according to their desire, the garrison that is in Joppa may be ejected."[5]

It is not apparent that this new declaration, which did not contain an ultimatum, had any effect on Seleucid actions or that Rome took any decisive steps, diplomatic or military, to demonstrate an intention to enforce it. Once again it was clear that, while Rome was prepared to encourage Judaea to help

destroy the Seleucid state, the Senate was not prepared to intervene directly in support of its efforts.

There was a strong party in the Senate that was adamantly opposed to the involvement of Rome in unnecessary adventures in the east, particularly such that would likely result in war and additional territorial conquests that would further expand an already overextended empire. At least for the present, Rome was not prepared go beyond limited diplomacy with regard to Syria and Palestine. As it turned out, Judaea successfully reasserted its claims by force of its own arms. Seleucid Syria, under continual pressure from the advancing Parthians in the east and undermined by Roman diplomacy and demands for tribute in the west, had been brought near to virtual military impotence.

NOTES

1. *1 Maccabees* 15:17–19.
2. M. Junianus Justinus, *Justini Epitoma Historiarum Philippicarum Pompei Trogi*, 36.3.
3. *1 Maccabees* 15:33–34.
4. Flavius Josephus, *Complete Works, Antiquities of the Jews*, 13.9.2.
5. Ibid., 14.10.22.

Chapter 4

Pharisees and Sadducees

During the reign of John Hyrcanus, which lasted until 104 B.C.E., significant developments took place internally both in Rome and Judaea that set the stage for a dramatic change in the character and extent of relations between Rome and Jerusalem. In Rome, the internal structure of the commonwealth was in a state of decay. The power of the traditional aristocracy in the Senate was being eroded steadily in favor of the ascendancy of military leaders who had rather different aspirations for the future of the Roman state. Their orientation was more imperial than national, and they sought and welcomed the opportunity to extend the Roman standards over new and distant territories. Under their influence, the Senate would be moved to reverse its policy of avoiding further direct involvement in Asia.

There could be little doubt that this fundamental change of orientation in Rome's foreign policy eventually would bring its interests and those of Judaea into conflict. Unfortunately for the latter, the timetable for such a collision of interests was advanced significantly by the deeply rooted internal social and religious conflict that erupted in Judaea, ultimately producing a state of turmoil that facilitated, indeed encouraged, Roman intervention and the subsequent loss of Jewish independence.

The seeds of this conflict had already begun to take root during the period of the initial Hasmonean revolt against Seleucid oppression. As indicated earlier, the principal motive that drove Mattathias to raise the banner of revolt was to prevent the complete Hellenization of the Jews and the death of traditional Ju-

daism. It was for this purpose that the Hasmonean struggle began, and it was in the cause of the furtherance of Judaea's uniqueness within a pagan world that Judah the Maccabee fought to regain control of the Temple, which he rededicated to the traditional faith of his people.

However, the situation underwent a radical change after Judah's death, when his brother Jonathan subsequently accepted the high priesthood from the Seleucid pretender Alexander Balas. This in itself represented a major concession to Hellenism, for it was a Greek custom, not a Jewish one, for a priest to receive his investiture from the secular authority. Furthermore, appointment to the office of high priest had been the traditional privilege of the Zadokite clan, of which Jonathan, being a Hasmonean, was not a member.

Beginning with this seemingly innocent step of donning the high priest's miter as a grant from the Seleucid ruler, Jonathan and his successors turned the underlying rationale of Hasmonean policy toward seeking ways to bring about the mutual accommodation of Hellenism and traditional Judaism. This was in stark contrast to the situation that prevailed earlier under Mattathias and Judah and represented an assimilatory tendency that evoked fierce opposition from religious traditionalists and therefore created fundamental cleavages within Judaean society. These splits began to take definitive shape during the reign of John Hyrcanus.

Upon reflection, it is perhaps not surprising that this should have occurred. It will be recalled that at the very outset of the Hasmonean revolt, the pietistic Hasidim represented a group that had little interest in national political independence. Their overwhelming concern was with the freedom to practice traditional Judaism as it had been transmitted through the centuries. Only when this freedom became seriously threatened were they prepared to join forces with the rebels. The Hasmoneans, on the other hand, soon adopted a nationalist perspective that transformed the fundamental character of their struggle, from one for the achievement of religious freedom into one for national independence.

Those who rallied to the Hasmonean standard, and became the devoted followers of Judah and his successors, quite naturally emerged as the political and military leaders of the people, forming a new Judaean aristocracy. As officials of the new national entity, they necessarily came into far more intimate contact with Greek civilization, which was pervasive in the region, than the majority of Judaeans. The conduct of diplomatic affairs necessitated the use of the Greek language and rule over districts containing mixed populations required familiarity with the diverse beliefs and customs of other peoples. In brief, the Hasmoneans and the new aristocracy tended to become cosmopolitan in outlook and taste, while still attempting to remain faithful to their religious heri-

tage, and evolved into the party of the Sadducees, a name of uncertain origin. The pietists and other traditionalists, on the other hand, rejected the notion that there could be an acceptable synthesis of Judaism and the aesthetic and other cultural aspects of Hellenism, and they became identified with the party of the Pharisees, or "separatists."

The Sadducees, permeated but not dominated by Hellenistic ideas, developed into statists, committed to the enhancement and extension of the national state that they were instrumental in founding. The Pharisees, who were greatly troubled by the inroads of Hellenism, were quite wary of the dangers to the integrity of the teachings of Judaism that could result from the growing preoccupation with politics and military affairs that reflected the Sadducee fascination with the state.

John Hyrcanus, high priest and ethnarch, tried to keep a foot in each camp. By background and orientation he was very close to the Sadducees, yet he also identified with the Pharisaism that began to become a significant popular force during his reign. From a strictly political perspective, John Hyrcanus was an outstanding ruler. He was devoted to his nation and land, and worked ceaselessly to improve its economic wellbeing, cultural development, and international political standing. However, it seemed clear to the Pharisees that John Hyrcanus assigned highest priority to his role as national political leader, giving short shrift to his responsibilities as high priest and religious leader of his people. This, in their view, could only lead to a complete distortion of the very purpose of the state, which was to facilitate the religious life postulated by Judaic teaching. As high priest, the latter should have been John Hyrcanus' primary concern and preoccupation. Since he was by no means inclined to accommodate himself to the Pharisee view in this regard, notwithstanding their general affection and regard for him personally, the Pharisees began to advocate a separation of the religious from the political authority in the state. They saw this as perhaps the only means by which they could assure at least a reasonable balance between the two. According to Josephus, John Hyrcanus was challenged directly by one of the Pharisee leaders to "lay down the high priesthood, and content thyself with the civil government of the people."[1]

The growing estrangement between John Hyrcanus and the Pharisees inevitably resulted in the removal of Pharisees from official positions of influence in the state and the consequently closer identification of the Hasmoneans with the Sadducees. This in turn fed the growing disaffection of the Pharisees, who were closer to the majority of the people. In this fundamentally ideological struggle, the Pharisees succeeded in rousing much of the public to support their cause, thereby creating a highly volatile situation from which there emerged a serious possibility of open civil conflict between the opposing factions.

It seems that the growing restiveness of the Pharisees under Hasmonean domination and the persistent threat of civil war that troubled much of his reign may have convinced John Hyrcanus that the future stability and security of the state necessitated hammering out some accommodation with the popular party. Although he would not consider any diminution of his own power, it appears that he was prepared to meet the major political demand of the Pharisees posthumously. He indicated his readiness to separate the civil and ecclesiastical authorities just prior to his death in 104 B.C.E., and in his will left the ethnarchy to his widow but assigned the high priesthood to his son Judah Aristobulus. The latter, however, was unwilling to abide by this arrangement and deposed his stepmother, promptly reuniting the secular and religious authorities once again.

Although this reconcentration of power in his hands augured a resurgence of the threat of internal strife, it did not become a significant factor during Judah Aristobulus' brief reign of only about one year. Aristobulus clearly understood the dangers of the course he had chosen and proceeded to consolidate his position cautiously, apparently avoiding direct provocation of the Pharisees whenever possible. Even when he became the first of the Hasmoneans to assume the title of king, which by tradition was the exclusive privilege of the House of David, he was careful to employ the title only in the non-Jewish parts of his realm. He had expanded Judaea's territory to include the northern Galilee, conquered from neighboring Ituraea, and it was there that he assumed the royal dignity. Thus, the Hebrew inscriptions on the coins that he minted for use within Judaea proper referred to him only as high priest and ethnarch. Nonetheless, his evident predilection for Greek customs and culture placed him squarely in the Sadducean camp. The consequences of this identification of the Hasmoneans with the Sadducees were to be realized during the reign of his brother and successor, Alexander Jannaeus who, after marrying Salome Alexandra, the childless widow of Judah Aristobulus, took the throne for himself.

It appears that Jannaeus conceived of himself as another King David, who would restore the ancient glories of Israel as well as its traditional boundaries. Accordingly, it has been suggested that the second of the Psalms, which in the Hebrew original contains an acrostic reading "For Jannaeus A. and his wife," had been recited at the royal wedding ceremony. If this theory is correct, the psalm itself lays out Jannaeus' program: "Why are the nations in an uproar? And why do the peoples mutter in vain? The kings of the earth stand up, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His anointed. . . . The Lord said unto me: 'Thou art My son, this day have I begotten thee. Ask of Me, and I will give the nations for thine inheritance, and the ends of the earth

for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel' " (Psalms 2:1–9).

Under Alexander Jannaeus (103–76), who was much more of a soldier than a statesman and who spent most of his 25 year reign in virtually unrelenting warfare, Judaea reached the zenith of its power in the Hasmonean period. Nonetheless, his imperialist reign began inauspiciously and was almost brought to an end at its very outset. Jannaeus began his quest for territorial expansion and consolidation with an attack on Ptolemais on the Mediterranean coast. The inhabitants of the city appealed for help from Ptolemy Lathyrus who, after having been chased out of Egypt by his mother Cleopatra III, was in control of Cyprus. Ptolemy responded favorably to the appeal and landed a force that defeated Jannaeus in 100. Jannaeus was saved only by the timely intervention of Cleopatra, who evidently wished to gain control of Palestine for herself. Following this inauspicious beginning, Jannaeus ultimately succeeded in extending Judaean territorial control to virtually all of ancient Palestine once again, even though he suffered another significant defeat in 94. This took place at the hands of Obodas, the king of Nabatea, when Jannaeus attempted to extend his control into the Transjordanian lands of Moab and Ammon. Nonetheless, under Jannaeus, Judaea's borders were expanded to include the strategically important coastal region (except for Ashkelon) from Mount Carmel in the north as far south as Rhinocorura (El Arish), on the Egyptian frontier. East of the Jordan River, Judaea now encompassed a belt of territory reaching from Paneas in the north to the Nabatean kingdom of Petra, southeast of the Dead Sea. Once again, after a hiatus of centuries, a Jewish state was in control of the African-Asian land bridge and the important north-south trade routes that passed through Palestine.

NOTE

1. Flavius Josephus, *Complete Works, Antiquities of the Jews*, 13.10.5.

Chapter 5

The Era of Jannaeus and Alexandra

Rome had obtained its first significant foothold in the Middle East as early as 133 B.C.E., when Attalus, ruler of Pergamon in western Asia Minor, decided for internal political reasons to leave his kingdom to the Senate in his will. Although it took some time before the Senate made up its mind about further expansion in the east, by 102 Roman military and naval bases were already to be found on the shores of the eastern end of the Mediterranean at Cilicia, along Syria's northern frontier. It thus happened that it was during the reign of Alexander Jannaeus in Judaea that Roman involvement in the Middle East began to broaden and deepen significantly.

Given the traditional policy of his Hasmonean predecessors, it might have been expected that Jannaeus too would have made an overture to renew the Judaean alliance with Rome. However, in a sharp deviation from the past, Jannaeus does not appear to have made any attempt to so. "It may be," as suggested by one scholar, "that he did not trust the Romans: by nature he trusted no one. It may be that he was aware that an alliance with Rome was a one-way street: Rome kept an alliance only when it suited its foreign policy. Janneus was a confirmed neutral, both in the dynastic wars between the Syrian kings and in the wars between the powers of the east and the west."[1] Jannaeus thus chose to remain neutral when the Armenia and Pontus emergent powers of western Asia came into conflict with Rome as a result of their expansion into Syria, which Rome perceived as a threat to its position as the dominant power in the eastern Mediterranean.

Domestically, Jannaeus' fundamental insensitivity to the religious sensibilities of the Pharisees created a gulf that soon became unbridgeable, precipitating a serious internal crisis. Jewish tradition records that, while officiating in the Temple as high priest during the Feast of Tabernacles, Jannaeus performed the role in accordance with Sadducean custom rather than in conformity with the more popular Pharisaic tradition. This outraged the Pharisees and triggered a major riot; the king was saved from harm at the hands of the enraged populace only by the intervention of his Greek mercenary guards.[2] Before the riot ended some 6,000 people were killed, transforming the Pharisees into implacable enemies of the regime. Thus, when Jannaeus later lost an army in an unsuccessful campaign against the Nabataeans in 94, the Pharisees initiated a bloody revolt that raged through the country for six years.

After the death of some 50,000 people, without sign of an end to the insurrection appearing anywhere on the horizon, Jannaeus finally was forced to try to come to terms with his internal foes. By this point, however, the Pharisees were not to be satisfied with anything less than his overthrow. Blinded by their rage, they squandered the opportunity presented by Jannaeus to introduce the religious reforms they had sought in calmer times. Instead, some extremists among the Pharisees committed the folly of turning to the Syrians for help, an act that was justifiably considered as treason by Jannaeus. Of course, as one writer points out, "[T]he Pharisees thought they were justified in doing what they did: in the first place, in their eyes religion came before the state, and even before national freedom, which cannot exist simultaneously with the tyranny of a dictator; and, second, the Jewish king himself was fighting his people with the help of foreign mercenaries—why then should they be forbidden to make use of the assistance of a gentile king?"[3]

Demetrius III Eukairos, the son of Antiochus Grypus, was only too pleased to accept the Pharisee invitation to intervene in Judaea, presumably on the understanding that he would grant them religious autonomy once the country became a Seleucid vassal. He invaded Judaea in 88 with an army that was augmented by large numbers of Jews, bringing its strength to some 40,000 men against a defending force little more than half its size. As expected, Jannaeus was soon defeated and forced to flee to the mountains of Samaria for refuge.

This calamitous blow against Judaean independence had a sobering effect on many people and caused a split in the Pharisee ranks. A large segment of the populace simply was not prepared to risk the loss of the country to the Syrians because of religious differences with Jannaeus and the Sadducees. Accordingly, a large contingent of people, estimated to have numbered about 6,000, who gave priority to their nationalist sentiments, switched sides and went over to the support of the beleaguered king. This brought about a reversal of the situa-

tion. With greater popular backing, Jannaeus was able to regain the upper hand and force the Syrians to withdraw.

Once having disposed of the immediate external threat, Jannaeus turned on his domestic enemies with a vengeance. He launched a reign of terror against those Pharisees who had continued to oppose him, driving many of the surviving leaders into exile. With Pharisee influence in the country effectively nullified, a situation of relative internal calm prevailed during the rest of Jannaeus' reign leaving him free to devote himself to territorial expansion, particularly in the north.

The political situation in northern Palestine became especially volatile as the Seleucid state in Syria underwent rapid dissolution, precipitating intervention there by Armenia. Since the death of Antiochus IX Cyzenicus in 95 B.C.E., Syria was in a state of anarchy. The ascendancy of his heir, Antiochus X, was contested by the five sons of Cyzenicus' half-brother Antiochus VIII Grypus, and all six became locked in a confused struggle for the control of Syria. The problem was further compounded when one of Grypus' sons, Antiochus XII Dionysus, attempted to attack Nabataea in 86. He was defeated and slain by the Nabataean king Aretas, who then extended his own control as far north as Damascus.

Weary of the chaos that prevailed in the country, the cities of northern Syria apparently solicited outside intervention to bring an end to the turmoil. According to the Roman writer Justinus, in preference to any of the Seleucid contenders for the throne, they invited Tigranes, king of Armenia, to restore order in the country and to become its ruler.

> After the kings and kingdom of Syria had been exhausted by intermitting wars, occasioned by mutual animosities of brothers, and by some succeeding to the quarrels of their father, the people began to look for relief from foreign parts, and to think of choosing a king from among the sovereigns of other nations. Some therefore advised that they should take Mithridates of Pontus, others Ptolemy of Egypt, but it being considered that Mithridates was engaged in war with the Romans, and that Ptolemy had always been an enemy to Syria, the thoughts of all were directed to Tigranes, king of Armenia, who, in addition to the strength of his own kingdom, was supported by an alliance with Parthia and by a matrimonial connection with Mithridates. Tigranes, accordingly, was invited to the throne of Syria.[4]

Tigranes responded favorably to the invitation to intervene and remained in Syria from 83–69. There is little reason to doubt that he would have attempted to extend his sway over Palestine as well, were it not for the tribute payments he received from Judaea. Tigranes appears to have established cordial relations with Jannaeus, permitting the latter to expand Judaea's borders northward

without opposition. However, this situation changed with the death of Jannaeus. The order he had imposed on the country by force disintegrated and Judaea once again became torn by internal conflict between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, making it a tempting target for the extension of direct Armenian domination.

Jannaeus' death made it possible for the Pharisee leaders to return from exile abroad, and upon doing so they promptly reassumed their political role as popular leaders of the masses, demanding the same religious and social reforms that led to their conflict with Jannaeus. However, by contrast with what occurred following the death of Judah Aristobulus, this time the circumstances of the succession were such as to facilitate an accommodation with at least some of the demands of the Pharisees. In accordance with the dead king's wishes, the royal widow, Salome Alexandra (76–67), actually succeeded him on the throne. This created a unique situation that made it absolutely necessary to separate the sacerdotal and secular authorities within the state, since a woman could not serve as high priest. Alexandra therefore appointed her eldest son, Hyrcanus, to the office.

Moreover, according to Josephus, as a result of Jannaeus' apparent concern about her ability to maintain a firm grip on the state in the face of Pharisee opposition, he wisely advised Alexandra to do what he himself had refused to consider, that is, to seek a power-sharing accommodation with them. He urged her to "put some of her authority into the hands of the Pharisees; for that they would commend her for the honor she had done them, and would reconcile the nation to her."[5]

Alexandra took this advice to heart and effectively gave the Pharisees virtually complete control over domestic affairs, hoping thereby to keep them out of foreign and military affairs, to which she primarily devoted her own attention. The leaders of the army, however, were overwhelmingly Sadducees, and the Pharisees were not satisfied merely with having achieved a position of religious predominance in the state and a decisive role in determining domestic policy; they were determined to suppress the Sadducees and eliminate their influence entirely.

Faced with a threat to their very existence, the Sadducees turned to Jannaeus' younger son Aristobulus for help. The prince, an aggressive and ambitious person, had been left without a significant role in the state and welcomed the Sadducee overture as an opportunity to establish a foundation from which he might later make a bid for power. He was also quite sympathetic to the Sadducees, who had given unreserved backing to Jannaeus, and he hoped they would prove as loyal to him in the future. Aristobulus prevailed on his mother, the queen, to permit the Sadducee leaders to take refuge from the Pharisees in sev-

eral of the outlying fortresses of Judaea that were some distance from Jerusalem. It evidently was Aristobulus' intention to use these strongholds, placed in the hands of his allies and supporters, as secure bases from which to mount a coup d'etat, at the appropriate moment, against both his aging mother and his brother the high priest.

In the meanwhile, Rome was busily engaged in extending its power directly into the region, as a result of its hard fought struggle with Mithridates of Pontus in Asia Minor. Since the eventual outcome of the Mithridatic war was still unclear at the time, the states of the region hesitated to take a stance that might place them on the losing side. Thus, when Licinius Lucullus went to Egypt in search of shipping to assist in the conduct of the Roman campaign, although he was given a royal welcome by Ptolemy Lathyrus, he left empty-handed. Indeed, as Plutarch relates: "Ptolemy, fearing the issue of that war, deserted the confederacy."[6]

Egypt would not commit itself to Rome as long as it saw any possibility of Mithridates prevailing. However, once it became clear that it would be the Romans that emerged victorious, Ptolemy eagerly sent some 8,000 troops to assist in the final stage of the conflict. This move contributed significantly to the preservation of Egyptian independence for a time after Rome established its complete hegemony over the eastern Mediterranean littoral.

Queen Alexandra also hesitated to throw Judaea's support behind Rome and decided to remain neutral. However, by contrast with Ptolemy, she did not align with Rome even after it was clear that it had made itself master of the region, a political misjudgment that surely had negative consequences for the continued independence of Judaea under Roman hegemony. Instead, she sought to assure Judaea's continued independence through the improvement of its defenses and the enhancement of its army with both domestic levies and foreign mercenaries. Nevertheless, Judaea's internal political instability tended to make it quite vulnerable to foreign encroachment.

From his position in Syria, Tigranes was able to take advantage of Judaea's internal problems and began to extend his power and influence further south into Palestine. He had already made himself master of the Phoenician coast and had laid siege to the gateway city of Ptolemais (Acre), thereby posing a direct threat to the heart of Judaea. Alexandra sought to deter an invasion by attempting to reach an accommodation with him, and dispatched an embassy to his court for that purpose. However, before Alexandra's diplomacy even had an opportunity to begin to explore the resolution of the immediate crisis, the matter was resolved unilaterally by Rome.

The Armenian king had aligned himself with Mithridates in the latter's protracted conflict with Rome, and thus made Armenia itself a Roman target. In

69 B.C.E., the Roman legions under Lucullus invaded Armenia and forced Tigranes to abandon his attempts to extend his sphere of control into northern Palestine. He broke off his southern campaign, withdrew from Syria, and quickly marched northward to defend his homeland. Josephus relates, "News came to Tigranes, that Lucullus, in his pursuit of Mithridates, could not light upon him, who was fled into Iberia, but was laying waste Armenia and besieging its cities. Now, when Tigranes knew this, he returned home."[7]

Despite having forced Tigranes out of Syria and wresting the country out of Armenian hands, the policy of the Senate remained basically opposed to further direct Roman administrative responsibilities in the region, and Lucullus, after considering the numerous contenders for the throne, turned the government over to Antiochus XIII Asiaticus. However, by his direct intervention in Seleucid dynastic affairs, Lucullus began the effective subjugation of Syria to Rome. From that time on, until its incorporation into the empire as a Roman province a few years later, Syria became a Roman vassal state. Once the Romans achieved control over Syria, it was only a matter of time before Palestine too became the target of Rome's regional expansion. Indeed, the temptation to complete Roman domination of the entire eastern Mediterranean littoral assured that an attempt soon would be made to eliminate the independence of Judaea and thereby link Roman Egypt to Roman Syria.

NOTES

1. Solomon Zeitlin, *The Rise and Fall of the Judaean State*, vol.1, p. 323.
2. The incident is recorded in the *Babylonian Talmud*, *Sukkah* 48b, although Jannaeus is not mentioned by name.
3. Joseph Klausner in Abraham Schalit, ed., *The Hellenistic Age: Political History of Jewish Palestine from 332 B.C.E. to 67 B.C.E.*, p. 232.
4. M. Junianus Justinus, *Justini Epitoma Historiarum Philippicarum Pompei Trogi*, 40.1.
5. Flavius Josephus, *Complete Works, Antiquities* 13.15.5. According to the Talmud, Jannaeus told his wife, "Fear not the Pharisees and the non-Pharisees but the hypocrites who ape the Pharisees" (*Sotah* 22b).
6. Plutarch, *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, p. 594.
7. Josephus, *Antiquities* 13.16.4. See also his *Wars of the Jews*, 1.5.3.

Chapter 6

The Succession Crisis and Roman Intervention

At about the same time that Rome's long arm was beginning to be felt along Judaea's northern frontiers, Salome Alexandra became seriously ill. Concerned about the future of the country, and wishing to avoid a succession struggle among her sons, she made it clear that it was her wish that she be succeeded by Hyrcanus, who had been serving as high priest. It is not clear whether she intended that Hyrcanus should be both king and high priest. That might have constituted an unacceptable breach of the compact with the Pharisees, since they were generally against the notion of a high priest-king, having long suffered the consequences of such a concentration of power during the reign of Jannaeus. It therefore seems likely that it was also intended that Aristobulus succeed his brother as high priest, thereby continuing the separation of powers arrangement that seemed to work reasonably well during Alexandra's reign.

Aristobulus, however, was no longer interested in a power-sharing arrangement with his brother, under which the real power of the state would be in the hands of Hyrcanus, whom he considered to be inferior to himself as a leader and too susceptible to the influence of his advisers. Alexandra's impending demise led Aristobulus to conclude that the moment was at hand for him to seize control of the state, and he initiated an insurrection intended to prevent Hyrcanus from taking power.

Many Judaeans, particularly among the aristocratic and nationalist Sadducees, flocked to his standard; and he quickly occupied 22 cities throughout the country. The latter provided him with the bases and resources necessary to sus-

tain the insurrection. In addition, the officers of Alexandra's army, who controlled the mercenary troops, also sided with Aristobulus. On the other hand, the Pharisees and the majority of the people supported his brother Hyrcanus, the high priest and heir presumptive to the throne. It seemed clear that the country would be confronted by the prospect of a civil war once the queen died.

Alexandra's death at the end of 67 B.C.E. brought on the expected succession crisis, as Hyrcanus became king as his mother had directed. A battle between the forces of Aristobulus and Hyrcanus soon took place near Jericho. Hyrcanus was defeated, although not decisively, and fled to safety. To avert the calamity of a protracted civil war, the brothers reached an accommodation whereby Hyrcanus abdicated the throne in favor of Aristobulus but was permitted to retain the high priesthood.

This was an important concession by Aristobulus to the Pharisees who, as already noted, were opposed to the concentration of the positions of high priest and political-military leader of the state in one person. Their basic objection was less ideological than practical. They were concerned that the very nature of the king's leading role in the foreign and military affairs of the nation might force him, even against his wishes, to give priority to secular matters over his sacerdotal duties. Nonetheless, for the Pharisees even this concession paled in significance against the fact that, with Aristobulus on the throne, the Sadducees had assumed effective control of the state. A renewal of the conflict between the Sadducees and Pharisees over the religious and social character of the Jewish state seemed inevitable.

In the meantime, an enterprising political adventurer named Antipater emerged on the Judaean scene. His father, Antipas, had been appointed as military governor of his native Idumaea by Alexander Jannaeus and had used his position to develop useful political contacts in the neighboring territories of Ashkelon and Nabataea. The Idumaeans had been forcibly Judaized only a few decades earlier and were still widely viewed in Jerusalem as semi-aliens, whose very adherence to Judaism was held suspect. Antipater, who had himself married into the Nabataean aristocracy, had managed somehow to become a close confidant of Hyrcanus. Considering the latter's inherently nonaggressive personality, Antipater became determined to manipulate Hyrcanus in such a manner as to become de facto ruler of Judaea himself. However, Hyrcanus' forced abdication of the throne threatened to put an end to Antipater's dreams of power. Accordingly, in an effort to secure his own interests, Antipater asserted his influence over Hyrcanus and soon involved the high priest in a plot to overthrow Aristobulus and reclaim the throne.

Hyrcanus was convinced by his counselor to place himself out of Aristobulus' reach by taking refuge with Antipater's friends in Nabataea. Antipater then enlisted the assistance of the Nabataean king Aretas III in his campaign for the throne by offering to return the Moabite territories wrested from Nabataean control by John Hyrcanus and Alexander Jannaeus, if Hyrcanus regained the throne. Aretas accepted and a Nabataean army soon invaded Judaea. With the invaders receiving overt assistance from the Pharisees, Aristobulus was forced to barricade himself in Jerusalem, which was placed under siege by the Nabataeans in 65.

While these events were taking place in Judaea, other dramatic events were occurring elsewhere in the region that would have profound effects on the future of Palestine. The powerful Roman general, Gnaeus Pompeius, had replaced Lucullus as Roman commander in Asia in 66, and soon brought the Mithridatic war to an end. He then set about redrawing the political map of the region to suit Rome's strategic interests as he conceived them. For as long as the Senate was in effective control of Rome's foreign affairs, its policy was not to seek territorial aggrandizement in Asia, but only to prevent political unification of the region under a power that might threaten Roman interests in the eastern Mediterranean. However, when Rome underwent internal political convulsions at the beginning of the first century B.C.E., and the traditional Roman upper class lost its place as the dominant political force in the Republic after the year 70, the approach to foreign affairs underwent dramatic revision.

Pompeius no longer felt bound by traditional senatorial policies regarding expansionism in the east and took steps on his own authority to assure permanent Roman control of the region. His scheme was essentially what would be called in contemporary geopolitical jargon a "rimland strategy" that involved establishing a continuous chain of Roman provinces along the Asian coast from Pontus on the Black Sea to Syria on the Mediterranean. Between these provinces and the Parthians to the east, there was to be a network of client states that constituted a buffer zone, giving strategic depth to the coastal provinces. The main client states in Anatolia and in the region east of Cilicia were to be Galatia, East Galatia, Paphlagonia, Cappadocia, Lesser Armenia, and Commagene, the northernmost of the Syrian provinces. Pompeius had advanced Rome's strategic frontier, although not necessarily its sphere of direct control, to the Euphrates and the Syrian desert. As long as Armenia remained friendly to Rome and Commagene guarded the crossing points on the upper Euphrates, Parthian expansion westward could be effectively contained. East of the Euphrates, Pompeius confirmed the rule of Abgar II over Osrhoene, and decided to return control of Corduene (Kurdistan), which had been seized by a Roman occupation force from the Parthians, to Tigranes of Armenia. Further-

more, Pompeius refused to respond clearly to the request of Phraates, the king of Parthia, that the Roman-Parthian border be established definitively at the Euphrates. By his cavalier treatment of the Parthian ruler, Pompeius unwittingly set the stage for the lingering conflict between Rome and Parthia, and the latter's successor state of Sassanid Persia, that was to influence much of the history of the region for the next six centuries.

In Syria and Palestine, to which Pompeius directed his attention in 65, matters clearly needed to be sorted out. Antiochus Asiaticus, whose claims to the Seleucid throne in Syria had been recognized as legitimate by Lucullus and the Senate, although contested by other indigenous claimants, had been acknowledged as king in Antioch after the withdrawal of the Armenians. However, it soon became evident that Sampiceramus, emir of the Arabs of Emesa (Homs), and Azizus, sheikh of a Bedouin tribe that roamed the area, were actually in control of much of northwestern Syria, making Seleucid claims to the territory of dubious significance. The practical alternatives for Rome seemed to be either to continue to support Antiochus, and hope that the kingdom would survive the continuing encroachment from the peoples of the desert, or to take a more direct hand in assuring regional stability. It was primarily a matter of determining what served Rome's interests in Syria best.

For Pompeius, there was little doubt about what needed to be done. Both Syria and Palestine constituted the weak links of his rimland strategy. Should either be tempted to assert its independence of Rome by aligning with the Parthians, the latter would be in a position to drive a wedge through the Roman lines to the Mediterranean, isolating Egypt from Asia Minor. This would place the Parthians in a position to interdict the critical lines of supply from the granaries in Alexandria to the armies in the Asiatic provinces of the Roman Empire. Accordingly, Pompeius reversed Lucullus' earlier decision about the Seleucid succession and informed Antiochus Asiaticus that he had no intention of restoring sovereignty to a king who had no knowledge of how to govern or maintain the integrity of his kingdom. This effectively brought the Seleucid dynasty to an abrupt end as Pompeius decided to establish a satrapy in Syria that would rule the country as a Roman province.

Turning to the chaotic situation in Judaea, which virtually invited outside intervention, Pompeius dispatched Marcus Aemilius Scaurus to deal with the crisis there. Scaurus intervened directly in the dispute over the succession and, apparently swayed by appropriate bribes and the prospect of greater future revenues from the wealthier nationalist party, decided in favor of Aristobulus. Undoubtedly, a key consideration in his decision was the fact that Aristobulus was safely ensconced in Jerusalem, and it would be difficult to dislodge him from there if he ruled in favor of Hyrcanus. Scaurus then induced Aretas to raise his

siege of Jerusalem and withdraw his forces by threatening a Roman attack on Nabataea. Aristobulus was thus permitted to continue to reign in peace for the next two years.

Pompeius himself arrived in Antioch in 64 B.C.E. and was promptly approached by representatives of both Aristobulus and Hyrcanus, effectively reopening the question of the succession. Aristobulus' representative, Nicodemus, sought to get Pompeius' confirmation of Scaurus' decision in Aristobulus' favor the previous year. At the same time Antipater, who came to Antioch as Hyrcanus' envoy, sought to get the Roman leader to reverse that decision. Aristobulus hurt his own cause by tactlessly having it pointed out to Pompeius that he had already bribed Scaurus for Roman support of his claim to the throne. Pompeius, who had become disenchanted with the brash Aristobulus, nonetheless decided to delay a decision on the matter until he met the contenders personally, a meeting which was to take place when he arrived in Damascus in the spring of 63.

During that critical encounter, Antipater implicitly suggested that it would better serve Rome's interest to back the weak and relatively harmless Hyrcanus rather than his far more assertive and self-assured brother. Indeed, the difference in the demeanor of the two brothers made it evident that Aristobulus would be much more difficult to control or influence than Hyrcanus. Pompeius was therefore surely inclined from the start to throw his support behind Hyrcanus. However, the matter was made more complex by the appearance of a third embassy from Judaea that essentially represented the Pharisees, but clearly not the people as a whole. It voiced opposition to either of the Hasmoneans serving as king. The Pharisees were convinced that many of Judaea's problems were a direct consequence of the unification of the high priesthood and the monarchy in the Hasmonean family. It was preferred, they insisted, that they not be "under kingly government, because the form of government they received from their forefathers was that of subjection to the priests of that God whom they worshipped."[1] The evident implication of this argument was that they preferred Judaea to be under Roman rule, but with religious and communal autonomy under the high priesthood.

After reviewing the prevailing state of affairs, Pompeius decided to reverse the earlier decisions of his mediator in the Judaean crisis. He was no doubt influenced in this to some extent by the appeal of Antipater on behalf of Hyrcanus, who charged Aristobulus with being a usurper as well as having participated in coastal piracy. That is, Aristobulus was accused of levying a tax on imports and exports by arrogating the right to inspect the vessels that traveled to and from the Palestinian coast. This latter charge surely struck a responsive chord with Pompeius, since his current high standing in Rome was largely a re-

sult of his successful campaign against the piracy in the eastern Mediterranean that was severely hurting the Roman seatrade. By thus linking Aristobulus with the piracy that brought Pompeius to the region in the first place, Antipater implicitly suggested that he probably should treat Aristobulus as an avowed enemy of Rome.

However, Pompeius' overriding concern was that he did not want a resurgent Judaea upsetting the regional balance of power that he was so carefully orchestrating. Antipater's arguments aside, he simply was disinclined to accept Aristobulus, the unequivocal choice of the Judaean nationalists, as king in Jerusalem. Nonetheless, Pompeius also concluded that it would be expedient to defer announcing his decision until after he had dealt with the lingering Nabataean problem, to which he accorded higher immediate priority. He was concerned that a disgruntled Aristobulus might seek to take advantage of his absence on the forthcoming Nabataean campaign to create chaos in the Roman rear in Palestine.

The Nabataeans, under Aretas, had extended their control, along the rim of the desert, as far north as the vicinity around Damascus. Pompeius was determined to make it clear to all that there was a new regime in the region, and that raiding and territorial encroachments were no longer acceptable modes of international political behavior from client states. Above all, Rome required and demanded stability on its eastern frontiers. Furthermore, the Nabataeans were in control of the lucrative spice route from South Arabia to the Mediterranean ports, a monopoly that Pompeius was determined to break.

Accordingly, Pompeius launched an expedition against Petra in 63, in which Aristobulus was supposed to participate in support of the Romans. However, no sooner had Pompeius crossed into Transjordan than Aristobulus, who correctly surmised what Pompeius' decision about Judaea would be since he had apparently declined to confirm the settlement of 65, seized the opportunity provided by Pompeius' departure and entrenched himself in the fortress of Alexandrion. Clearly upset by this act of defiance, Pompeius interrupted his campaign against the Nabataeans and marched instead into Judaea to confront Aristobulus.

As soon as he crossed the Jordan near Scythopolis (Beisan) and entered Judaean territory, Pompeius sent an emissary to Aristobulus demanding that the prince appear before him to explain his actions. Aristobulus hesitated to comply, but was convinced to do so by his advisers, who apparently were less concerned about his safety than the size of the Roman army under Pompeius' command and were anxious to avoid what they feared might be a disastrous confrontation. After Aristobulus returned safely, without any interference, from his meeting with Pompeius, he was summoned once more to argue the

merits of his claim to the throne before the Roman commander. However, this time Hyrcanus was to be present as well. Pompeius apparently was attempting to wear Aristobulus down psychologically to reduce the impact of the unfavorable decision he was going to render regarding the succession. Aristobulus was subsequently summoned to a third meeting with Pompeius, at which he was asked to sign an order to his officers directing that they turn over all the fortresses in the country to the Romans. Successfully intimidated by Pompeius, Aristobulus felt that he had no alternative but to sign the document.

However, no sooner had Aristobulus signed away the defenses of Judaea than he recognized that Pompeius had effectively conquered the country without fighting a battle or suffering a single casualty. This realization was more than Aristobulus could stomach and he hurried to Jerusalem to prepare the country for a defensive war. Pompeius, sensing what was going through Aristobulus' mind, hurried after him with his forces to prevent the prince from carrying out the necessary preparations. With the Roman legions camped at the gates of Jerusalem, and with his support among the people significantly diminished because of the alignment of the Pharisees with Hyrcanus, Aristobulus was forced to acknowledge that the prospects of success in a contest of arms with Rome were rather slight. Accordingly, he went to see Pompeius to negotiate an accommodation. Under the terms of the agreement, Aristobulus agreed to pay a substantial indemnity to Rome and to accept a permanent Roman garrison in Jerusalem as the price of peace.

Pompeius sent Aulus Gabinius to take control of Jerusalem, this time keeping Aristobulus as a hostage in his own capital. In Jerusalem, some of the prince's more determined supporters refused to accept the terms of the agreement worked out with Pompeius and continued to defy the Romans, blocking their entry into the city. They correctly viewed Aristobulus' capitulation to Pompeius as the end of Judaea's political independence, and simply were not prepared to accept such a loss without a fierce struggle. Moreover, by contrast with Aristobulus, his followers generally were not in a position to purchase their safety now so that they could fight again at a later date. Even if the Romans would spare them, there was little prospect that they would receive similar consideration from the Pharisaic followers of Hyrcanus, who were bent on their destruction since they were mostly Sadducees. Consequently, they decided to fight to prevent the Romans from taking Jerusalem, without regard to the odds against their success. The supporters of Hyrcanus, including those Pharisees who were anxious to avoid what could only be a bloody conflict, sought to improve their standing with Pompeius by collaborating with the Roman forces and admitting them into the Upper City. At the same time, the hard

line Sadducean supporters of Aristobulus barricaded themselves in the Temple enclosure where they held out against the Romans for some three months.

By cutting the bridge across the Tyropoeon valley, the defenders made an attack on the Temple mount extremely difficult, since a Roman assault up the steep slopes of the Kidron valley was out of the question as a practical matter. The Temple precincts were effectively isolated and made virtually inaccessible from the outside. It thus took a major engineering effort to fill in an area in the valley north of the Temple with earth and timber to create a solid foundation for the heavy Roman siege engines. The Romans were able to undertake the latter project because the Judaeans, in accordance with their religious convictions, were unwilling to desecrate the Sabbath by fighting except in actual self-defense. Accordingly, the Romans had the necessary construction work done on the Sabbath when they could proceed in safety to prepare the means for the assault on the Temple.

Finally, in mid-summer 63, under Pompeius' personal command and bolstered by the partisans of Hyrcanus, the Romans broke through the Judaean defenses and conquered the Temple precinct in a bloody campaign that took some 12,000 Judaean lives. The ferocity of Pompeius' assault on the city was memorialized in a pseudepigraphical lament: "He captured her fortresses and the wall of Jerusalem; For God Himself led him in safety, while they wandered. He destroyed their princes and every one wise in counsel; He poured out the blood of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, like the water of uncleanness."[2] Aristobulus, his uncle Absalom, and his sons Alexander and Antigonus were subsequently taken to Rome in 61, where they remained under loose arrest, to be displayed as trophies in the celebration of Pompeius' triumphant march through the east.

The intriguing question here is whether the Roman intervention and conquest were inevitable, or whether they could have been avoided if the Judaeans had been united in their stance, if Aristobulus and Hyrcanus, the Sadducees and Pharisees, had held their internal struggles in check in the face of the external threat. Upon reflection, it seems rather unlikely that unity among the Judaeans would have in any way prevented the imposition of Roman hegemony on the country. Palestine's geopolitical role as the land bridge between Africa and Asia, between Egypt and the Roman positions in Syria and Asia Minor, made it imperative that Pompeius seize the country to consolidate his eastern frontier against the Parthians. Once he took Syria, there was no way that Judaea could be allowed to remain sovereign and independent. However, it does seem quite reasonable to suggest that if the Judaeans had united in face of the external threat from Rome, the terms and circumstances of their subjugation might have been rather different and more favorable. If Judaea had ap-

peared as a stable regional state with a powerful central government, it is quite conceivable that Pompeius would have permitted it to remain intact as a client state, with substantial if not complete internal autonomy. This had been the case with a number of other small states in the region. However, having presented itself to the Roman leader as a country in the throes of civil conflict, its leaders at each other's throats and its internal stability threatened by seemingly persistent religious and social disorders, Judaea gave Pompeius little choice but to dispose of the country in a rather different manner. He became determined to reduce its power to a mere shadow of its former self, and thereby to minimize its capacity and potential for upsetting the stability of the political arrangements he had put in place for securing Rome's interests in Asia.

In restructuring the government of Judaea under Hyrcanus, Pompeius introduced a change which coincidentally appeared to accede to the wishes of the Pharisees, but which actually reflected his own inclinations. He insisted that the new Roman client state revert to its earlier system of internal rule by its high priests, the form of Judaean government originally recognized by Rome in its treaty with Judah the Maccabee in 161. Hyrcanus was to rule the country as high priest and ethnarch, but not as its king. This meant, in effect, that the country could be autonomous internally, but that the ruling high priest would not have independent control of the country's external affairs. Furthermore, Pompeius demanded that all the territories conquered by Alexander Jannaeus, as well as some of those taken even earlier by Simon and John Hyrcanus, be detached from Judaea. In effect, he removed from Jewish rule all the former Greek cities that the Hasmoneans had incorporated within the Judaean state. The city of Scythopolis and other Hellenistic towns in Transjordan were reconstituted as the independent Decapolis or Union of Ten Cities. With the detachment of the coastal region, Judaea reverted to the status of a landlocked mini-state, shorn of the prerequisites for regional power.

The much reduced Judaean state, which now included only Judaea, Galilee, part of Samaria, and eastern Idumaea, was placed under the civil jurisdiction of Scaurus, the Roman governor of Syria, who had two legions at his command to enforce the peace. Because of the religious differences between the Samaritans and the Jews, Pompeius also decided to remove part of Samaria and the Jezreel valley from Judaea as well, thereby establishing a broad Roman-controlled corridor between Judaea and its northern district of Galilee. Communications between Jerusalem and Galilee could only be maintained by means of a difficult route through the Jordan valley. This systematic diminution of Judaea was clearly a carefully thought out program to reduce its influence in the region. As one historian observed with respect to Pompeius' approach to dealing with the region, "He was now convinced, if he had not made up his mind on the point

from the first, that the Jewish kingdom as it existed was a menace to the peace and prosperity of Syria; the Jews were a troublesome and unruly people; they were furthermore backward and superstitious, and their conquests had had a disastrous effect on the civilization of southern Syria."[3]

NOTES

1. Flavius Josephus, *Complete Works, Antiquities*, 14.3.2.
2. *Psalms of Solomon*, 8. in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 2.
3. A. H. M. Jones, *The Herods of Judaea*, p. 22.

Chapter 7

The Rise of the Antipatrids

The removal of Aristobulus from power by Pompeius and the demotion of Hyrcanus from king to ethnarch marked the end of the Hasmonean monarchy, and the beginning of the steady rise of Hyrcanus' adviser, Antipater, and his family, known as the Antipatrids, to effective power in the state. Antipater was committed unequivocally to the proposition that Judaea's continued existence as a coherent political entity could only be maintained as client state of the Roman Empire. He was therefore prepared to do whatever was necessary to assure the Romans that Judaea could be relied upon to conduct itself as a responsible client state in support of Roman interests in the region. Indeed, Pompeius' decision to give the ethnarchy to Hyrcanus was based to a large extent on the supposition that Antipater would be the one in actual control of Judaean political affairs and that he would remain completely loyal to his Roman masters upon whom his present and future career depended.

Under the influence of the Pharisees, the majority of the people were prepared to accept the situation as it was, grateful to have internal autonomy and the freedom to practice their way of life undisturbed, albeit under Roman political and military domination. The leading Pharisees of the day strongly advocated political passivity on the part of their followers. Thus, Shemayah (Sameas) taught, "Love work and hate mastery, and make not thyself known to the government."[1] His colleague Abtalion (Pollion) added, "Ye wise, take heed to your words, lest ye incur the guilt that deserves exile."[2] In other words, these

sages adjured the Pharisees to keep their distance from both politics and politicians and to devote themselves exclusively to economic and religious pursuits.

However, within a few years after Pompeius' departure from Judaea a rather different mood came over many people including a good number of Pharisees as well. The initial euphoria over the return to rule by the high priest soon gave way to an awareness of the loss of the power of national self-determination that accompanied the loss of political independence. The ethnarch and his Idumaean adviser came to be viewed by many former supporters as traitors who had sold out Judaea to the Romans for personal gain. Thus, when Alexander, one of Aristobulus' sons, managed to make his way back to Judaea from exile in Rome in 57 B.C.E., he received a surprisingly warm welcome from the people.

The Judaean nationalists, who by this time included many Pharisees as well as Sadducees who could not be reconciled to their subjugation to Rome, began to rally around Alexander. Before long the Hasmonean prince was able to mount an insurrection against Hyrcanus and the small Roman garrison in the country with a force of some 10,000 armed infantry and 1,500 cavalry. Catching Hyrcanus and Antipater by surprise, Alexander soon overran much of Judaea, seizing the important fortresses of Alexandrion, Hyrcania, and Machaerus. Because of the surprising extent of popular support for the revolt, Hyrcanus and Antipater simply were unable to cope with it on their own and had to appeal for Roman help.

Gabinius, who succeeded Scaurus as the proconsul of Syria in 57, dispatched a force under Marcus Antonius to assist Hyrcanus in quelling the insurrection, but Alexander routed it too. Gabinius was therefore compelled to invade Judaea with his legions, which together with the forces of Hyrcanus greatly outnumbered the rebels. After losing some 3,000 men in battle and an equal number as captives, Alexander was forced to retreat to the fortress of Alexandrion, where he was besieged by Gabinius and Marcus Antonius. Alexander's force, however, was too large to permit the Romans to take the fortress by direct assault. Since Gabinius had no interest in tying up his Syrian legions in a protracted siege in Judaea, the proconsul was prepared to reach an accommodation with Alexander that would bring the insurrection to an early end. Gabinius offered amnesty to the insurgents and free passage out of the country for Alexander in exchange for the return of the three fortresses. Since there was no prospect of success for the present insurrection, Alexander agreed to the terms and capitulated.

There could be little doubt that the manner in which the insurrection was brought to an end served to enhance Alexander's reputation and further diminish those of Hyrcanus and Antipater in the eyes of the Judaeans as well as the

Romans. Since Hyrcanus had proved incapable of maintaining order in the country without direct Roman intervention, Gabinius decided to introduce structural changes in the political organization of Judaea that would make further insurrections more difficult to organize. This reflected his judgment that the Judaeans continued to harbor serious nationalist ambitions that were detrimental to effective overall Roman control of the wider region. Applying the classic Roman principle of "divide and rule," Gabinius decided to eliminate the central government of Judaea in its entirety, thereby making it extremely difficult if not impossible for the querulous Judaeans to unite politically. Hyrcanus was stripped completely of his residual secular powers as ethnarch and was permitted only to serve in a strictly sacerdotal capacity as high priest. The country was divided into five separate administrative districts, each with its own capital at Jerusalem, Gadara, Amathus, Jericho, and Sepphoris. Each district had its own *synedrion* (senate) or *sanhedrin* composed of the leading citizens, which was directly responsible to the Roman governor. Gabinius hoped that by setting up separate autonomous district administrations he would promote local rivalries that would make cohesive political action infeasible. However, his expectations in this regard were to be disappointed.

Before these structural reforms had a chance to produce any significant results, a new revolt broke out after Aristobulus and his other son Antigonus succeeded in escaping from Rome and returned to Judaea in 56 B.C.E. The revolt, which was characterized more by spontaneity than planning, had virtually no chance of success since it pitted untrained and undisciplined Jewish levies against the powerful Roman legions. Aristobulus had only 8,000 well-armed men who were overwhelmed by the far superior Roman forces. After losing some 5,000 on the battlefield, and another 2,000 who fled to the hills for safety, Aristobulus retreated to the fortress of Machaerus with what was left of his army but had no realistic hope of holding out against the Romans. It was not long before he and Antigonus were captured and sent back into exile in Rome.

The following year Gabinius engaged in an expedition to Egypt for the purpose of restoring Ptolemy XI Auletes (the father of Cleopatra the queen) to the throne from which he had been deposed by popular demand. The army of Judaea, under the leadership of Antipater, was called upon to serve in this campaign in an auxiliary capacity. This provided a unique opportunity for Antipater to ingratiate himself with Gabinius. To penetrate Egypt from the northeast the Roman army had to pass by Pelusium, a frontier stronghold near the mouth of the Nile. It also happened to be the case that the population of Pelusium was largely Jewish. Antipater exploited this fact and made a successful appeal to his co-religionists in the fortress, presumably invoking the name

and authority of the high priest, whose prestige at this point in time was probably greater outside of Judaea than within its borders, to permit the Roman forces to pass unopposed.

It was during the time when Gabinius and Antipater were preoccupied in Egypt that the Hasmonean prince Alexander returned to Judaea from exile once again, receiving even greater popular acclaim than on the previous occasion. Since both Syria and Palestine were virtually depleted of Roman troops at the time, Alexander considered the moment propitious for another attempt to restore Judaean independence. With some 30,000 poorly armed and unseasoned recruits at his command, he launched another insurrection that quickly overwhelmed the few Roman forces left in the country, forcing them to flee for safety to Samaria. However, after this initial success, the insurrection foundered. Antipater, who had returned from Egypt, undermined it to a large extent by managing to convince many of Alexander's supporters of the futility of rebellion against Rome, and a large number of desertions took place seriously weakening the rebel forces. When Gabinius returned from Egypt with the main body of the Roman army, he, together with the Judaean army of Hyrcanus, confronted Alexander near Mount Tabor where the insurgents were defeated and massacred. Alexander was sent into exile once again.

It was now apparent that Gabinius' political strategy of "divide and rule" for containing unrest in Judaea was a failure. In tacit recognition of this, and presumably as a reward for Antipater's services to Rome, Gabinius reversed his earlier decisions and reappointed the weak and indecisive Hyrcanus as ethnarch of the Jews once more. In effect, Judaea's central government was restored under Antipater's control, although Gabinius did not formally abolish the separate administrative districts that he had established earlier. It was now fully evident to Antipater that his career, and the political future of his family, depended far more on how he was perceived by Rome than on his relationship with Hyrcanus.

NOTES

1. *The Babylonian Talmud, Avot* 1:10.
2. Ibid., 1:11.

Chapter 8

The Era of Julius Caesar

While these developments were taking place in Judaea, dramatic events were transpiring in Rome as well. The three most powerful men in the republic, Julius Caesar, Gnaeus Pompeius, and Marcus Licinius Crassus, formed an alliance in 56 B.C.E. known as the Triumvirate and assumed supreme control of Rome. It was clear that each of the triumvirs harbored great personal ambitions. Crassus, the richest and oldest of the trio, could claim no military achievements that could compare with those of his two younger colleagues and was anxious to add such credits to his dossier. The opportunity for him to do so was to present itself in Asia.

Rome's relations with Parthia, which was still smarting over Pompeius' cavalier treatment of its king, deteriorated sharply when Gabinius sought to intervene in the Parthian succession crisis of 55. The situation along the frontier became highly volatile and war between the two powers seemed imminent. Crassus, who arranged to become proconsul of Syria upon the conclusion of his term as consul in Rome, sped east ahead of time with the apparent intention of igniting a conflict with Parthia so that he could win his laurels in battle. He arrived in Syria in the spring of 54 and, with some 40,000 troops at his command, began making raids across the Euphrates into Parthian territory. As he prepared to launch a full-scale invasion of Parthia, by contrast with the caution displayed by Pompeius when preparing his Nabataean campaign, Crassus paid little attention to the problem of securing his rear in Palestine. Short of the funds needed to finance his campaign, Crassus plundered the treasury of the

Temple in Jerusalem, infuriating the population of Judaea and presenting the nationalist elements in the country with the gift of a cause around which they could mobilize popular sentiment against Roman domination.

As it turned out, Crassus proved to be quite incompetent as a general and his Parthian adventure soon turned into a debacle. In the spring of 53, he made the wholly avoidable mistake of leading his legions in a frontal assault on Parthia across the plains of Mesopotamia, rather than through the hill country of Armenia where his forces, which were primarily infantry, would have had the tactical advantage. As a result of this tactical blunder the Roman forces were cut to ribbons at Carrhae (Haran) in open country by the powerful Parthian cavalry. The Parthian campaign was an unmitigated disaster that cost Crassus his life in addition to the destruction of most of the Roman army in the region.

The Parthians soon attempted to follow up on their victory over Crassus and invaded Syria in 52 under the leadership of Pacorus, the son of the Parthian king. The Parthian attack was welcomed by the followers of Aristobulus and his sons, who saw it as presenting yet another opportunity to regain Judaea's independence, particularly since there were only some 10,000 Roman troops remaining in Syria. Moreover, the death of Crassus brought about an end to the triumvirate, and given the incompatible claims and ambitions of Caesar and Pompeius, a conflict between them seemed imminent. Consequently there was little prospect of any immediate reinforcement of the Roman garrisons in the region from other parts of the empire. Under the circumstances, the Judaean nationalists were encouraged to make common cause with the Parthians who hoped to drive the Romans out of Asia entirely, and yet another rebellion in the name of Aristobulus erupted.

Unfortunately for the Judaean cause, the Parthian invasion of Syria was successfully repelled by the vastly outnumbered Romans under the exceptionally competent leadership of C. Cassius Longinus, who replaced Crassus as the governor of Syria. Once having disposed of the Parthian threat, Cassius turned his attention to the suppression of the Judaean revolt, which had come under the leadership of Peitholaus, a former general of Antipater's Judaean army who had defected to the camp of Aristobulus. With the cooperation of Antipater and Hyrcanus, Peitholaus was captured, and Cassius quickly suppressed the insurrection. To prevent any further outbreaks in the country, Cassius took the extraordinary step of selling into slavery some 30,000 Judaeans who were capable of bearing arms.

In the meantime, developments were taking place in Rome that would have momentous consequences for the Jews in Palestine. The last tie that still bound Caesar and Pompeius, that of family, came to an end with the death of Pompeius' wife Julia, who was the daughter of Caesar. Their competition for

power soon escalated into a major civil war as Caesar crossed the river Rubicon, which divided Cisalpine Gaul from Roman Italy and represented the limit of Caesar's legal consular jurisdiction, and marched on Rome on January 10, 49 B.C.E. with a force of some 5,000 men. Pompeius and his aristocratic followers in the Senate were forced to flee the country, crossing the Adriatic into Macedonia, as Caesar made himself master of Italy. Instead of immediately pursuing Pompeius, Caesar chose to invade Spain, which was his antagonist's main base of support. As he put it, "I go to meet an army without a leader, and I shall return to meet a leader without an army."[1] After subduing Spain in about 40 days, Caesar then proceeded to Greece where he ultimately defeated Pompeius decisively in the plains of Pharsalia in 48. Pompeius fled the battlefield and sailed for Egypt with Caesar following in hot pursuit. It was evidently Pompeius' intention to mobilize Egypt behind him, but he was assassinated upon his arrival there on the orders of the Egyptian king.

Caesar arrived in Alexandria at the head of a small force of about 3,000 men, only to learn that his quarry had already been disposed of. Encouraged by the relatively small size of the forces accompanying Caesar and seeing an opportunity to break out of the Roman orbit, the Egyptian commander Achillas mounted an attack on the Romans with a large army supported by the mobs of Alexandria. Caesar was forced to burn his ships to prevent their capture, and soon found himself blockaded in a section of the city. His situation was desperate. However, just at this critical point, the army of Mithridates of Pergamon, augmented by a relief force recruited from the principalities of Syria, arrived on the scene. Perhaps most important among the client rulers who came to Caesar's rescue was Antipater, acting on behalf of Hyrcanus, and his force of 3,000 Judaeans. It was Antipater who materially helped Mithridates to pass by Pelusium without incident, as he had done earlier for Gabinius, thereby facilitating the junction of the relief forces with those of Caesar, turning the tide of battle in the latter's favor. Antipater, exploiting the prestige of Hyrcanus as high priest and therefore the nominal leader of the Jews throughout the world, also prevailed on the large Jewish community of Alexandria to ignore the orders of Ptolemy XIV to oppose Caesar and his forces. Caesar was quite grateful to Antipater and his nominal master Hyrcanus, and compensated them both for their support, consciously overlooking the fact that they had initially supported Pompeius in the civil war.

Nonetheless, Caesar's position with regard to the future of Judaea was complicated by other factors. When his conflict with Pompeius first erupted, Caesar sought a means of undermining Pompeius' preeminent position in the east. Accordingly, he released Aristobulus, who had been brought to Rome originally by Pompeius and was still being held prisoner there. Caesar gave him

command of two legions and instructed him to proceed to Judaea where he was to create a diversion to sap the strength of Pompeius' forces. However, Aristobulus was assassinated at the instance of the proconsul of Syria and Pompeius' father-in-law, Q. Metellus Scipio, before leaving Rome in 49. Scipio then arrested Alexander, the son of Aristobulus, charged him with responsibility for the earlier revolts against Rome and put him to death in Antioch. However, once Pompeius was defeated and Caesar became master of Rome in 48, Aristobulus' surviving son Antigonus arrived in Alexandria from his place of asylum in Chalcis to present his claim to Judaea in the name of his father, who had always been a staunch opponent of Pompeius.

Caesar, who had relocated from Alexandria to Antioch in July 47, was now confronted by the conflicting claims of the houses of Aristobulus and Hyrcanus, the latter represented by Antipater. A crucial factor in his decision was his imminent departure for Asia Minor to crush the revolt of Pharnaces, king of Pontus. With the threat of a new Parthian invasion of Syria a constant concern, it was essential from a Roman standpoint that control of Judaea be entrusted to one whose loyalty to Rome was strong and reliable. Under this criterion, Antipater was clearly the preferred choice. Although Aristobulus had been prepared to battle Pompeius on behalf of Caesar, he and his house were clearly identified with the Judaean nationalist camp, and as such, had a long record of opposing Roman hegemony in Judaea. Antipater, and his patron Hyrcanus, on the other hand, had never challenged Roman rule and had on more than one occasion backed Rome against their own countrymen. It was true of course, as Antigonus reminded Caesar, that Antipater had earlier supported Pompeius. However, Caesar correctly attributed this to the fact that at the time it was Pompeius who represented Rome in the region. Once it was clear that it was Caesar who spoke for Rome, Antipater readily switched his loyalties. After some deliberation, Caesar concluded that under the circumstances it was Antipater and Hyrcanus who could best be entrusted with the rule of Judaea on behalf of Rome.

Accordingly, the paramount leader of the Romans set aside the claim of Antigonus and in 47 accorded recognition and elevated status to Hyrcanus and Antipater. The former was awarded senatorial rank and assigned the ethnarchy of the Jews, which was made hereditary in his family. As recorded by Josephus, Caesar declared, "I will that Hyrcanus, the son of Alexander, and his children be ethnarchs of the Jews, and have the high priesthood of the Jews forever, according to the customs of their forefathers, and that he and his son be our confederates."[2] The subdivision of the country into autonomous districts carried out by Gabinius was formally rescinded, and Judaea's integrity as a country was restored. Antipater was made a citizen of Rome and granted immunity from

taxation. Furthermore, he was confirmed in his position as prime minister to Hyrcanus which, given the latter's general passivity, made him the de facto ruler of Judaea. There are also some indications that Antipater may have been designated as procurator of Judaea, Samaria, and Galilee. In addition, in recognition of Judaea's status as a client state, as opposed to a province, of Rome, the payments of tribute formerly imposed on the country by Pompeius were nullified, and the Roman garrisons were withdrawn. Moreover, because of the hardships they would endure as a consequence of their religious and dietary practices, Jews everywhere were exempted from compulsory military service in the Roman legions. The Judaeans were granted local autonomy and religious freedom and were permitted to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. The port of Joppa was restored to Judaea, once again linking Jerusalem with the sea, although a substantial annual payment was required to compensate Rome for the lost revenues that it previously realized from the busy port. In brief, Judaea as a whole was granted the most favorable status possible within the Roman Empire, short of complete independence. It was accorded the legal status of one of the *civitates sine foedere immunes et liberae*, that is, a state granted self-government as a voluntary gift of Rome, although in practice all such entities were subject to arbitrary interference in their internal affairs by Roman military governors.

The vast majority of the people of Judaea were prepared to accept the prevailing situation, which reflected the political realities of the period, namely, that Rome had made itself master of the region and was the ultimate arbiter of how and by whom Judaea would be governed. Nonetheless, the Judaean aristocracy, composed primarily of Sadducees, was intensely jealous of Antipater's power and position and considered him to have usurped the legitimate authority of the Hasmoneans. Acting on his independent authority as a Roman official, Antipater created the office of military governor in both Judaea and Galilee, and appointed his sons Phasael and Herod respectively to those positions. Unable to attack Antipater directly, the Judaean aristocracy now sought to get at him through his son Herod on the basis of the latter's actions as military governor of the detached province of Galilee.

The boundary between Galilee and Syria, as demarcated by the Romans, had become a matter of contention between the people of the district and their neighbors across the border. The Galileans claimed ownership of many of the towns and villages along the frontier that had been awarded to Syria, but the Romans routinely dismissed such claims. Finally, a band of Judaean nationalists, under the leadership of a certain Hezekiah of Galilee, seized a number of these sites, hoping to restore them to Judaea. As far as the Romans were concerned these men were nothing but brigands and were to be hunted down and

killed. To establish his credibility with the Romans, Herod undertook to eliminate the problem. He pursued and killed Hezekiah and many of his followers, thereby earning the gratitude of the governor of Syria, Sextus Caesar. However, his actions were found offensive by many Judaeans who viewed these men not as bandits but as nationalist guerrillas fighting to defend the territorial integrity of Judaea. Loud complaints were registered against Herod for acting arbitrarily in the matter and without proper authorization. Hyrcanus came under heavy pressure, particularly from the families of the slain, and felt obligated to order Herod to appear before the Sanhedrin or state council in Jerusalem to answer the charges raised against him.

The Sanhedrin was composed at the time either of members of the priestly houses or of lay families of wealth, the social standing of which had been closely linked with the Hasmonean dynasty. As such, it was resentful of the influence of Antipater who, being of Idumaean origin, was still considered by many as an outsider. The Sanhedrin, confronted by the reality of Antipater's power in the state, was very jealous of its prerogatives and authority and was determined to protect them against further erosion. At issue in the current instance was the charge that Herod had usurped the exclusive jurisdiction of the Sanhedrin with regard to capital offenses. Accordingly, his decision to execute Hezekiah and his followers was arbitrary and contrary to law since he had acted without a specific grant of authority from the supreme council.

Herod had no practical alternative to complying with Hyrcanus' summons; to refuse would have made it appear that he himself was a rebel, and the time was not yet ripe for the Antipatrids to challenge the authority of the Hasmoneans openly. Nonetheless, on Antipater's advice, Herod took enough troops with him to Jerusalem to ensure his personal safety and ability to escape in the event of his conviction by the Sanhedrin. He also took the additional precaution of getting Sextus Caesar to write to Hyrcanus urging that Herod be acquitted of the charges against him, suggesting that a failure to do so could engender dire consequences. Herod's overbearing presence proved sufficient to cow most of the council. However, he was unable to intimidate the two Pharisee leaders, Sameas and Pollion, who had no compunction about indicting Herod before the council. Their intervention seems to have been decisive and the Sanhedrin apparently was fully prepared to convict Herod of having committed a capital offense.

Concerned about the political consequences of Herod's conviction, Hyrcanus advised Herod to leave Jerusalem before the council rendered its decision. Heeding this advice, Herod fled to Damascus and began to plan a march on Jerusalem to exact vengeance on Hyrcanus and the Sanhedrin for the indignities he had suffered at their hands.

Herod appears to have been deterred from carrying out his plan by Antipater and his brother Phasael, who pleaded with him not to enter Jerusalem in force since to do so would likely result in ritual defilement of the Temple. Should such a sacrilege take place, they would be abandoned by their Pharisee supporters and the entire populace would align with the aristocracy against the Antipatrids. Nonetheless, it seems most likely that the major influence behind deterring Herod from such a rash move was Sextus Caesar. Although he was pleased by Herod's handling of the Galilean insurrection, and was sensitive to Caesar's apparent affection for Antipater and his sons, he did not want to see a coup d'etat take place that would destroy the political balance between the Antipatrids and the Hasmoneans. Such a balance was probably necessary to maintain order in the country. Furthermore, such an action by Herod would probably earn him the enmity of Caesar, who would not tolerate the deposition of Hyrcanus, whom he had personally appointed as ethnarch. In other words, the decision as to who would rule in Jerusalem was one to be made in Rome and nowhere else.

Herod reluctantly accepted the wisdom of the advice offered him and cancelled his plans for a march on Jerusalem, but continued to harbor the ambition to become the formally recognized ruler of Judaea. As reward for his prudence, as well as to make use of his considerable leadership skills, he was subsequently appointed military governor of Coele-Syria and Samaria by Sextus Caesar in the year 46, placing him in a strategic position to apply political pressure on Jerusalem whenever it served Roman purposes.

Concerned about the possible implications of the close relationship between Herod and Sextus Caesar, Hyrcanus hastened to dispatch an embassy to Rome requesting that the Senate formally ratify the privileges he had earlier received from Julius Caesar. After some delay, the latter body acceded to his request and issued a decree in early 44 confirming Hyrcanus as high priest and ethnarch of the Jews.

NOTES

1. Suetonius, *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, p. 21.
2. Flavius Josephus, *Complete Works, Antiquities*, 14.10.2.

Chapter 9

Herod and Marcus Antonius

Because of the character of the dependency relationship that existed between Jerusalem and Rome, the political affairs of Judaea were affected intimately by the turbulent politics of the distant imperial capital. Thus, when Caesar sought to convert his dictatorship into a monarchy in 44 B.C.E., he was assassinated, throwing the entire Roman world into political convulsions.

Judaea and the Jews of the Roman Empire greeted the death of Caesar as a calamity. Not only had Caesar restored Judaean autonomy and integrity, he had also granted Jews everywhere within the empire freedom of worship. Judaism had been accorded the status of a legally tolerated religion. This was quite exceptional, since most other eastern religious cults were banned in Rome. Thus, Suetonius noted that the Jews present in Rome mourned Caesar for several nights.[1]

The murder of Caesar set in motion a succession struggle that quickly turned into a major civil war as the contestants for power left Rome to mobilize their forces for the impending struggle. Brutus went to Macedonia, while Cassius, who was one of the principal conspirators and who had been nominated by Caesar to serve as proconsul of Syria for the year 43, went to Antioch to assume control of the province.

The political situation in Syria was particularly unstable. Caecilius Bassus, a former supporter of Pompeius, had revolted in 46 against the proconsul Sextus Caesar. The latter was subsequently assassinated by his mutinous troops who joined forces with the rebels. At the time that Julius Caesar was killed, Bassus

and his forces were under siege in Apamea by the Caesarian general Antistius Vetus, to whose support Antipater sent troops from Judaea under the command of his sons. In the spring of 44, L. Statius Murcus replaced Vetus in Syria. To further complicate matters, in the summer of 44, Marcus Antonius assigned the post of procurator of Syria to Dolabella, who soon arrived in the province. To preempt Dolabella from exercising influence on the Roman commanders on behalf of the Caesarians, Cassius quickly won over Murcus and forced both Vetus and Bassus out of Syria, over which he now asserted his own control.

Cassius was in dire need of funds to prepare for the inevitable confrontation with the Caesarians. He therefore abrogated the privileges granted to Judaea by Caesar and levied a tribute on the client state of 700 silver talents, an exorbitant sum for a country that had been robbed repeatedly by itinerant Roman generals. To make matters worse, Cassius wanted the money quickly and Antipater simply could not raise the required sums by the given deadline. In retaliation for his failure to deliver the demanded amounts, Cassius seized the populations of several Judaean towns and sold them into slavery. At the same time, Herod was sent to Galilee to raise the 100 talents of tribute assigned to that district. He managed to ingratiate himself with Cassius by demonstrating great zeal in raising the required sum. Cassius responded to this demonstration of fealty by confirming Herod's appointment as procurator of Coele-Syria and Samaria in 43. He was also assigned the responsibility for supervising the stores of arms and the fortresses in Judaea proper. These marks of Cassius' favor had the probably unintended effect of upsetting the delicate balance between the Hasmoneans and the Antipatrids that had been the cornerstone of earlier Roman policy in Judaea.

In the meantime, Dolabella succeeded in establishing a foothold at Laodicea (Latakia), on the Mediterranean coast south of Antioch, from where he challenged Cassius' control over the province. Cassius marched north from Judaea to confront Dolabella and captured Laodicea in June 43, as Dolabella had himself killed by his own guards. The departure of Cassius from Judaea was seen as an opportune moment for Malichus, a political foe of Antipater who had become an influential figure in the court of Hyrcanus, to get rid of his enemy and thereby bolster his own position as the power behind the ethnarchy. Accordingly, Malichus apparently had Antipater poisoned while dining with Hyrcanus. Historian Michael Grant writes in assessment of Antipater,

> It was the end of an epoch, and the end of an exceedingly clear-sighted man. Herod's father had correctly grasped the lesson that the great western power had come to stay: this was a situation that no amount of resistance movements could alter. But in order to avoid looking like an open collaborator with Rome he had preferred to act under cover

of Hyrcanus, and it was fortunate for him that, at least until the very last stage, Hyrcanus was a malleable enough patron to make this possible. Many people hated Antipater—he was sacrificed to the hatred of the Jewish aristocracy.[2]

Upon the death of Antipater, Malichus took control of Jerusalem, ostensibly acting in the name of Hyrcanus. Herod promptly marched south from Galilee to Jerusalem with an army of mercenaries to exact vengeance. Once again, however, his brother Phasael deterred him from doing so. Phasael was concerned about the likelihood of plunging the country into a civil war, particularly at a time when Rome itself was in the throes of such a struggle. Moreover, since neither Herod nor Phasael had been given the authority for such a move, Cassius might easily have interpreted it to be an act of rebellion. Herod recognized the wisdom of his brother's advice and returned to Samaria to deal with some disturbances that erupted there. He did, however, write to Cassius about the affair, accusing Malichus of poisoning his father, and he received a sympathetic response. With Cassius' victory over Dolabella, which made the former the undisputed master of Syria, Herod felt assured that he soon would succeed Antipater and assume power in Judaea, with Hyrcanus remaining at best a mere figurehead.

The moment Herod awaited was not long in coming. After Cassius took Laodicea, he set up his headquarters there and a steady stream of princes and dignitaries appeared before him to pay homage and present him with gifts. Among those who were expected to come for this purpose were Hyrcanus and Malichus. Herod, with Cassius' blessing, decided that the time was ripe to rid himself of Malichus, particularly since he was outside of Judaea. It is quite likely that Malichus similarly thought that the moment was propitious for him to eliminate Herod as well as Phasael and take power either for Hyrcanus or himself. Some suggest that Malichus may have already heard about the formation of a new Roman triumvirate consisting of Marcus Antonius, Lepidus, and Octavian, and their impending campaign against Brutus and Cassius. With Cassius likely to have to leave Syria soon, Herod would be without his Roman sponsor and therefore would be highly vulnerable. Unknown to Malichus, however, was the fact that Cassius had already instructed one of his tribunes to assist Herod in exacting revenge for the murder of Antipater. Thus, shortly after Herod greeted both Hyrcanus and Malichus upon their coming ashore at Tyre en route to Laodicea, the Roman military escort assigned to Malichus murdered him. With the elimination of Malichus, Hyrcanus had little choice but to accept Herod as de facto ruler of Judaea.

As anticipated, Cassius soon received an urgent message from Brutus to join him in Macedonia to confront the combined forces of Antonius and Octavian, and he left Syria for that purpose at the beginning of 42 B.C.E. Before he de-

parted, he reconfirmed Herod as procurator of Coele-Syria and promised to appoint him king of Judaea after he returned victorious from the impending battle with the Caesarians. Cassius' departure served as a signal for a number of attempts to overthrow Herod and Phasael, who had assumed control of Judaea. Most significant among these was the one organized by Antigonus, son of Aristobulus, who had been living in exile at the court of Ptolemy of Chalcis, a minor principality in southern Syria. Ptolemy had married Antigonus' sister and sought to restore Judaea to his brother-in-law. He therefore made an alliance with Marion, the prince of Tyre, who marched southward to join forces with Antigonus in an invasion of Judaea. Herod, however, attacked and defeated the Tyrians before they could link-up with the forces of Antigonus. He then confronted Antigonus and defeated him before he even reached the borders of Judaea. Having thus saved Hyrcanus from certain overthrow by his nephew, Herod was given a hero's welcome by the ethnarch upon his return to Jerusalem.

The subsequent defeat of Cassius and Brutus in October 42, on the plains of Philippi in Macedonia, marked the end of the Roman republican party and brought the entire Roman world into the hands of Octavian and Marcus Antonius. Lepidus was reduced to a minor role although he still nominally remained one of the triumvirs. The two principals divided the empire between them: Octavian took control of all Roman territories in the west, and Antonius became the master of all of Rome's holdings in the east.

When word of Cassius' defeat reached Judaea, renewed attempts were made to eliminate Herod and Phasael. At the same time, the Antipatrids were attempting to switch allegiances to the victorious Antonius. Deputations from Judaea approached Antonius while he was still in Bithynia, on the Black Sea, with the complaint that the two Antipatrid brothers were usurping the power of the ethnarchy from Hyrcanus, whose position had been confirmed originally by Julius Caesar. Aware of the conspiracy against him, Herod also went to see Antonius; and, assisted by substantial bribes, Antonius turned a deaf ear to all criticism of the Antipatrids. When Antonius later moved to Ephesus, on the western coast of Asia Minor, he was approached by another delegation headed by Hyrcanus that urged him to restore to Judaea the rights originally granted by Caesar, but which were subsequently taken away by Cassius. Since Cassius had acted without proper authority, as far as the triumvir was concerned, Antonius acceded to Hyrcanus' plea and ordered the restoration of confiscated Judaean property and the release of those Jews who had improperly been enslaved.

Again, when Antonius arrived in Daphne, a suburb of Antioch, he was greeted by a delegation of some 100 influential Judaeans who accused Herod of

usurping the legitimate powers of Hyrcanus. In this instance, Hyrcanus, who was present, rose to defend Herod and Phasael, who had prevented his overthrow by Antigonus. In response, Antonius confirmed the brothers as governors of Galilee and Jerusalem respectively. In addition, he awarded them the rank of tetrarch, which was equivalent to the status of a prince. This made Herod and Phasael the formally recognized rulers of Judaea under the nominal overlordship of the ethnarch Hyrcanus. Nonetheless, when Antonius subsequently arrived at Tyre on his way to Egypt, he was met by yet another delegation of no less than 1,000 men from Judaea who came to denounce Herod. Antonius refused even to see this group, whose forcible dispersion caused numerous casualties and resulted in a number of executions.

At about this same time, the special relationship between Hyrcanus and Herod became sealed by the latter's betrothal to the ethnarch's granddaughter Mariamme. The full implications of this were not to be realized for several years. Initially, it appeared that the betrothal merely suggested that Hyrcanus, who had no male heir, might be prepared to regard Herod in that capacity. Herod subsequently attempted to exploit this possibility as a vehicle for overcoming the opposition of the aristocracy to the elevated position he held in the state, but it was to prove of little avail.

Despite Antonius' assumption of power in the Roman east, the general political situation in Syria and Palestine remained quite volatile. Just prior to the disastrous battle of Philippi, Cassius had sent Quintus Labienus as an agent to the Parthian king Orodes II, to solicit his assistance against Octavian and Antonius. Although the Parthians did not intervene in time to be of any help to Cassius, they did undertake an invasion of Syria in 41, seeking to bring over to their side the numerous Roman garrisons in the country that were hostile to Antonius. Orodes' son Pacorus, who led the Parthian invasion of Syria a decade earlier, joined forces with the renegade Roman commander Labienus and crossed the Euphrates in a two pronged assault, Labienus marching into Asia Minor as far as Ionia, as Pacorus headed south in to Syria. The Parthian advance encountered only feeble military opposition; many of the inhabitants of the areas under Parthian attack were tired of Roman rule and welcomed the invaders. Thus, Commagene, the eastern gateway to Asia Minor, and Chalcis in southern Syria went over to and joined forces with the invading armies.

Antigonus, the son of Aristobulus, who was still in exile at the court of Chalcis, where Ptolemy had been succeeded by his son Lysanias, prevailed upon the latter to appeal to the Parthians to march on Jerusalem and place the Hasmonean prince on the throne. Lysanias promised to pay the Parthians 1,000 talents for their trouble, along with a gift of 500 women captives, the wives and daughters of their adversaries. The Parthians accepted the offer and

soon drove southward into Palestine, Pacorus proceeding along the Mediterranean coast, while his general Barzapharnes made his way south through the interior. By prior agreement, Antigonus entered his ancestral lands with a Parthian cavalry force and quickly began gathering supporters from the Jewish-populated areas of the Carmel region, near the coast.

Antonius, who had relocated his headquarters to Alexandria so that he could be with his paramour Cleopatra, the queen of Egypt, remained immobilized, leaving Herod and Phasael to cope as best they could with the overwhelming power of the Parthians. As might be expected, the forces of Hyrcanus and Herod were handily defeated on the plain below Mount Carmel, and Antigonus and the Parthians swept on to Jerusalem. At this time, fighting broke out in the capital between the followers of Hyrcanus and Herod and those of Antigonus, with the majority of the Jerusalemites shifting their support to the latter. Before long, Antigonus was able to gain control of the Temple and most of the city, while Herod and Phasael only managed to remained in command of the area near the Hasmonean palace.

The situation of Herod and Phasael seemed quite hopeless. Since Pacorus and the Parthians ostensibly entered Jerusalem only for the purpose of restoring order, Phasael came to believe that it might be possible to negotiate an agreement that would permit the brothers to leave the city. For his part, Antigonus was determined that neither they nor Hyrcanus be allowed to leave and regroup their forces. Accordingly, Antigonus contrived to have Pacorus agree to conduct the negotiations with Hyrcanus and the tetrarchs. Hyrcanus and Phasael were persuaded by Pacorus to meet with the Parthian satrap of Syria, Barzapharnes, at Ecdippa (Achziv) on the coast north of Ptolemais. Herod, however, suspected foul play and refused to go to the meeting. Instead, he escaped from Jerusalem to the safety of the virtually impregnable fortress of Masada near the Dead Sea.

As Herod anticipated, Hyrcanus and Phasael were both taken prisoner, and in the year 40 Pacorus placed Antigonus, the surviving son of Aristobulus, on the throne in Jerusalem as king of Judaea. Of equal importance, he was also named high priest. Phasael was soon to meet his death under questionable circumstances, while Hyrcanus met with a kinder fate. To permanently eliminate Hyrcanus as a threat, Antigonus had his ear cut off. By being thus physically mutilated, Hyrcanus became forever disqualified for the high priesthood under biblical law, which required that the high priest be without physical blemish. Hyrcanus was subsequently sent into exile in Parthia where he was well treated.

There could be little doubt that Antigonus had taken a particularly dangerous step in accepting the throne of Judaea from the Parthians. It was evident

that Rome and Parthia were locked in a struggle for control of the Middle East and that its geographic position gave Judaea a strategic importance to both that far exceeded anything else of intrinsic value that might be found in the country. Should Rome succeed in pushing the Parthians back across the Euphrates, Antigonus and Judaea would surely suffer the consequences of having entered into an alliance with them. Still, at the time, it was by no means evident that Rome would prevail in the conflict. For one thing, the Parthians had only recently inflicted a humiliating defeat on Crassus. For another, the Roman general Labienus was apparently so convinced that Syria could be wrested away from Rome that he had defected to the Parthians. Indeed, Labienus had just succeeded in occupying Cilicia, where he killed the Roman governor that Antonius had appointed over the province, thereby cutting off Syria from a direct link with Roman Asia Minor. Antigonus, indeed, was gambling for high stakes, perhaps higher than he realized at the time.

At long last, Antonius finally decided to leave the delights of Cleopatra's court in Alexandria and to take some action to reverse the rapidly deteriorating situation in Syria and Asia Minor. He went to Tyre, the only city in Syria that had managed to hold out against the Parthians, from where he hoped to initiate a counteroffensive. Upon his arrival, however, he learned that his position in Rome had been placed in jeopardy by the Perusine war that was raging between his estranged wife Fulvia, in league with Lucius Antonius, and Octavian. Although Antonius disapproved of the conflict, which Fulvia started and was losing, his loyalists were being driven out of Italy, giving Octavian an eminence in Rome that Antonius viewed as extremely dangerous to his interests. Accordingly, he abandoned his campaign against the Parthians and proceeded to Italy to take up the matter with Octavian.

For a while it appeared that a new civil war was imminent, but it was averted at the time by the other military commanders who saw little sense in butchering each other over an argument that could easily be settled through negotiation. Under pressure from them, Antonius and Octavian agreed to negotiate their differences. An agreement concluded at Brundisium (Brindisi) in the early autumn of 40 B.C.E. confirmed Antonius' position as Roman commander over Macedonia, Greece, and the eastern provinces. To cement the alliance between the two leaders, Antonius, whose wife Fulvia had just died, agreed to marry Octavian's sister Octavia. Both the marriage and the peace agreement seemed destined for a breakdown, given the fundamental conflict of interests between Octavian and Antonius. Nevertheless, as long as Antonius remained in Rome, both leaders managed to keep their mutual antagonisms from flaring up.

In the meanwhile, Herod, having made an unsuccessful appeal for help from the king of the Nabataeans, had no prospect of assistance from anyone other than his Roman sponsor, Antonius. Accordingly, Herod made his way to Alexandria and, when learning that Antonius had gone to Rome, decided to follow him there. Herod realized that this might prove to be the most decisive step he had ever taken and he therefore proceeded with great deliberation. Arriving in Rhodes en route to Rome, he delayed his departure from the island for several months while he sounded out his friends in Rome about his prospects for a successful mission. He also used the time to raise, from the Jewish communities along the coast of Asia Minor, the substantial funds he would need to smooth his way in Rome, where he finally arrived in the fall of 40.

Antonius greeted Herod warmly and introduced him to Octavian, who was favorably predisposed toward him because of the earlier friendship that Julius Caesar had displayed toward the Antipatrids. In anticipation of a major war with Parthia, the triumvirs concluded that Herod would prove to be a useful asset in stabilizing Roman control of the region. Herod was presented to the Senate by the orator Messalla and the admiral Atratinus, both of whom apparently were deeply distrustful of Cleopatra's ambitions for Egypt and thought it wise to have a reliable counterweight in Palestine. After the two senators made their case, denouncing Antigonus as a collaborator with Parthia, Antonius proposed to the Senate that the kingship of Judaea, suspended since the demotion of Hyrcanus by Pompeius in 63, be restored and that Herod be awarded the throne. This was obviously necessary since his antagonist, Antigonus, already bore the title of king thanks to the Parthians. The recommendation was adopted unanimously by the Senate in December 40.

The decision of the Senate had very dramatic implications for Judaea. Although the restoration of the monarchy undoubtedly would be welcomed by the Judaeans as a sign of increased status within the Roman world, the designation of Herod as king meant the termination of the tradition, more than a century old, that linked political rule in Judaea with the high priesthood. Moreover, the latter was the exclusive perquisite of the Hasmoneans. Although the Pharisees were opposed to a single person occupying both offices, it was primarily because they felt that the high priesthood, which they considered to be the more important office, might suffer from such an arrangement. As a practical matter, this tradition had only been broken in the past when Salome Alexandra ruled as queen after the death of Alexander Jannaeus. Since a woman could not serve as high priest, Hyrcanus was given the position that he held until his overthrow by Antigonus and the Parthians. The priesthood, however, was not a voluntary vocation but a matter of familial lineage, and since Herod did not come from a priestly family, he could not possibly serve as

high priest. Thus, the decision to make Herod king carried with it the need to appoint someone else as high priest, a post that unavoidably placed its occupant in a position of considerable power in the Judaean state. This would create strong prospects for internal instability in the event of a power struggle between the king and the high priest. Furthermore, traditional Roman practice with respect to client states had been to choose a new ruler from the reigning dynasty when a vacancy occurred, and Herod was not a Hasmonean. The Romans were aware of the implications of their decision, but had concluded that there was no viable Hasmonean alternative to Herod, since Antigonus had disqualified himself by virtue of having aligned himself with Parthia.

To mitigate the anticipated criticism of his elevation to the throne in Judaea, where the Hasmonean name still carried a great deal of weight, Herod let it be known that the decision of the Senate had come as a complete surprise to him. He insisted that his only aim in turning to Rome had been to assure the succession of Hyrcanus' young grandson, Aristobulus, the ten-year-old brother of Mariamme. As for himself, he only desired to be the boy's trusted adviser, as his father had been to Hyrcanus. Of course, at the moment, the Senate's decision was purely theoretical since Parthia and not Rome was in control of Judaea. If Herod were to be king, he first would have to retake the country.

Following his reconciliation with Octavian, Antonius returned to the east taking up residence in Athens and dispatching a fresh army under Publius Ventidius Bassus against the Parthians. The latter, whose army consisted primarily of horse cavalry, lost much of their tactical advantage once they were drawn away from the plains where they could maneuver freely. But, a good part of western Syria was mountainous; and, by 39, the Parthians were in the process of being driven out of the conquered Roman territories by Ventidius. When Herod arrived at Ptolemais early that year, he discovered that the Parthians were already gone and that he had to contend only with the opposition of Antigonus and his Judaean supporters. It also soon became evident to Herod that, even though the local Roman commanders were obligated to help him since he was acting under Roman auspices, he could not rely on Ventidius or the other Roman generals for any real assistance. Indeed, after the defeat of Labienus and his reconquest of Syria, Ventidius had entered Judaea to dethrone Antigonus but was successfully bribed by the latter to defer such a move. Ventidius then departed for Cappadocia, leaving part of his army behind in Syria under the command of Silo, who likewise generally maintained a truce with Antigonus.

Using funds lent to him by a wealthy Jew of Antioch, Herod recruited an indigenous mercenary force and invaded Galilee, soon taking the capital Sepphoris (Zipori). He then prepared for an assault on Jerusalem with the as-

sistance of a contingent of Roman troops from Syria under Silo, whom Ventidius ordered to help him. Before launching his attack, Herod made a serious attempt to avoid a struggle and gain unopposed entrance to the city. Toward this end he issued a proclamation to the people of Jerusalem promising to take no vengeance on even those who actively opposed him. There were, in fact, substantial numbers of people in the city who were favorably disposed to admitting him. Aside from those who were his actual supporters, there were many others who were anxious to avoid the destruction that would likely take place if Herod's offer were not accepted. He also found substantial backing among the Pharisees. Indeed, according to Josephus, two of the most prominent of the Pharisee leaders advised the people to open the gates of the city to Herod.[3] They reflected the Pharisee view that many of the tribulations that Judaea had suffered were the direct result of the internecine struggles of the Hasmonean family for political power, struggles that corrupted the high priesthood. However, since Herod was not of a priestly family he could not possibly become high priest, thereby forcing a separation of the sacerdotal from the political, a change that they saw as a positive development for the future of Judaea.

As it turned out, Herod's proclamation had little tangible impact and he eventually ordered his men to attack the city walls. At first, the Roman troops under Silo lent their assistance, but Silo soon lost interest in the conflict and insisted on withdrawing his forces to winter quarters. It seems most likely that he too was bribed by Antigonus to stay out of the conflict. With the departure of the Roman forces from Jerusalem, Herod was left without allies and without sufficient forces to defeat Antigonus decisively. As a result, he was forced to break off his attack on Jerusalem and to concentrate instead on consolidating his hold on Samaria and Galilee. For a time it appeared that a stalemate had emerged between Herod and Antigonus. However, Herod was unwilling to accept an indefinite prolongation of the status quo and he decided to make a personal appeal for help to Antonius.

After decisively defeating another Parthian invasion of Syria in 38, during which Pacorus was killed, Ventidius took the field against Antiochus of Commagene, who had been an ally of Pacorus, and laid siege to the capital at Samosata. It soon developed that Ventidius' reputation became so inflated because of his victory over the Parthians that it aroused the jealousy of Antonius. The latter therefore left his headquarters at Athens and proceeded to Commagene, where he relieved Ventidius of his command and personally took over the siege of Samosata. Consequently, it was to Samosata that Herod went to make his appeal for assistance.

Antonius was very sympathetic to Herod's presentation and resolved to give him the support he required. With the Parthian war at an end, there was a sudden availability of large numbers of idle Roman troops and Antonius was happy to find useful employment for them. Antonius also charged Gaius Sosius, the governor of Syria, with the responsibility for making certain that Herod was placed on the Judaean throne. Reinforced by a Roman legion, Herod marched south toward Judaea while Sosius was expected to follow him shortly with a larger Roman army.

While Herod was out of the country, Antigonus took advantage of his absence to inflict a humiliating defeat on Herod's brother Joseph at Jericho, where the latter and his Roman cohorts were annihilated. Herod was furious, but realized that he did not have sufficient forces to meet Antigonus in a full test of strength on the battlefield. Antigonus, however, made the fatal error of believing himself to be stronger than he actually was. He decided to split his forces, sending one wing under Pappus to Samaria in a flanking maneuver against Herod's columns. Herod seized the opportunity presented and hastened to challenge Pappus before Antigonus could reinforce him. The armies met about 20 miles north of Jerusalem, near the town of Isana, and the forces under Pappus were beaten decisively. This loss effectively sealed Antigonus' fate. With the road to Jerusalem open before him, Herod quickly marched against the capital, entering the city from the north, and placed the Temple under siege.

Herod was now so confident of the outcome that he interrupted the campaign to go to Samaria, where he married Mariamme, the granddaughter of both Aristobulus and Hyrcanus, whom he had betrothed some five years earlier. Presumably, with Jerusalem about to fall to him, he believed that it was the appropriate time to consummate the marriage that he hoped would help make him generally acceptable to the people as the successor to the Judaean throne in place of the Hasmonean Antigonus. By the time he returned to Jerusalem to continue the siege, Sosius arrived with a substantial force of 11 legions backed by Syrian auxiliary troops. Despite the heroic defense that Antigonus staged, the Temple precinct fell in the late summer of 37 to the combined armies of Herod and Sosius after more than a five-month siege.

The struggle for Jerusalem was a bitter one. As Dio Cassius observed in his account of the capture of the city, "The Judaeans, indeed, had done much injury to the Romans, for the people is very bitter when aroused to anger; but they suffered far more themselves."[4] A very heavy toll was taken of the defenders, who were massacred not only by the Romans but also by the followers of Herod who took their vengeance on those who had sided with Antigonus. The Roman slaughter in Jerusalem soon reached the point where Herod became

worried that it might so embitter the nation as to undermine his ability to rule the country. To bring it to an end, he bought off Sosius and the Roman army with bonuses and they withdrew from the city.

Antigonus was taken prisoner by Sosius and brought in chains to Antioch where Antonius was located at the time. It seemed likely that Antigonus would be taken to Rome as a trophy of Antonius' victories, a possibility that became a matter of grave concern to Herod. He was afraid that since Antigonus had earlier lived in captivity in Rome for some years with his father Aristobulus and was therefore well known there, he might be able to gain a hearing before the Senate. Herod could not be sure that the Senate might not rescind its decree regarding his accession to the throne in favor of the popular Hasmonean prince. He therefore decided to forestall such a possibility, no matter how remote, by offering a sizeable bribe to Antonius to have Antigonus put to death. Given the amount of trouble caused to Antonius by Antigonus, it would seem that a bribe was hardly necessary to get Antonius to agree to dispose of him. In any case, with Antigonus' death the Hasmonean dynasty came to an end after ruling Judaea for 103 years. At long last, Herod's dream was realized; he was finally installed as king of Judaea and a client prince of Rome.

NOTES

1. Suetonius, *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, p. 48.
2. Michael Grant, *Herod the Great*, p. 41.
3. Flavius Josephus, *Complete Works, Antiquities* 15.1.1.
4. Dio Cassius, *Dio's Roman History* 49.22.

Chapter 10

The Reign of Herod the Great

The throne that Herod ascended in 37 B.C.E. was far from secure. It was the Romans, not the Judaeans, who placed him on it. As a client king, he realized there was an implicit understanding that he could enjoy Rome's acceptance and confidence as long as he maintained security along the frontiers as well as if Judaea had become a Roman province. Moreover, as was the case with Archelaus, king of Cappadocia, and Amyntas, king of Galatia, Herod owed his crown to Marcus Antonius who, in accordance with the renewed triumvirate agreement reached with Octavian at Tarentum in 37, remained in control of the Roman East.

Herod also knew that the usual Roman practice was to vest power in a member of the indigenous royal family that could be trusted. Since he was not of royal blood and his Idumaean lineage made his Judaic credentials suspect in the eyes of many, he had little popular support and considerable opposition from his subjects. This made him critically dependent on Antonius' firm backing in the early years of his reign. His marriage to the Hasmonean princess Mariamme helped him achieve his initial designation as king of Judaea by providing a fig leaf of dynastic continuity. However, Herod remained intensely concerned about a possible future challenge to his legitimacy from a true Hasmonean who might yet gain the support of Rome.

Accordingly, Herod systematically sought to eliminate or suppress every vestige of popular discontent over his having replaced the Hasmoneans and having established formal Antipatrid control over the country. His primary

target was the Sadducean party, composed primarily of the priests and the wealthy aristocrats who were adamantly opposed to him, not only because he was not a Hasmonean but also because he was a descendant of a people compelled to accept Judaism. In their extreme nationalism, which became xenophobic, the Sadducees rejected the validity of proselytization generally and questioned the right of even a descendant of proselytes to hold any public office whatever in the Judaean state, a view that Herod correctly saw as a direct challenge to his own legitimacy. To deal with this problem, Herod systematically decimated the Sadducee-dominated council of state, the Sanhedrin. He executed some 45 of its members, including most of the prominent aristocrats in the land.

For all practical purposes, the Sadducean party ceased to exist. Many of its former adherents joined the Pharisees, but retained their previous views on all issues other than those concerning purely theological and ritual matters. In effect, the traditional Sadducee position on nationalist questions was now reflected in the Shammaitic school of the Pharisees. Although the newly vacant council seats were refilled with Pharisees of the pacifist Hillelite school, Herod nonetheless deprived the reconstituted Sanhedrin of many of its traditional judicial and political prerogatives. Its jurisdiction was now restricted almost exclusively to matters of religious affairs and Mosaic Law. In effect, Herod was drawing a much sharper distinction between secular and religious affairs in the state, particularly since he was disqualified from participating in those matters that were the concern of the priesthood.

At the same time, Herod was confronted by a serious foreign relations problem. Antonius had once again come under the spell of Cleopatra and had married her in the autumn of 37, in accordance with Egyptian custom, without first divorcing his Roman wife Octavia, the sister of his chief competitor for power, Octavian. Antonius knew that the marriage would not be regarded as valid in Rome and that he therefore could not be charged with bigamy. However, he was surely aware that it was a highly impolitic act given the tenuous nature of his relations with Octavian. The latter was not likely to accept the obvious insult to his sister and by extension to himself with equanimity.

Under Cleopatra's influence, Antonius began to indulge in dreams of creating a vast Oriental empire that would rival that of Alexander the Great, to be ruled by a dynasty deriving from his union with the queen of Egypt. As a first step toward the realization of this dream, Cleopatra prevailed upon Antonius to assist in incorporating in her own domain those territories that had once been part of the Ptolemaic Empire. She thus persuaded Antonius to do away with Lysanias of Chalcis, who had earlier supported Antigonus and the Parthians, and to transfer his lands to her rule. Since Palestine also had once

been part of the Ptolemaic empire, Cleopatra was determined to regain control of the strategically important territory which was now mostly under the dominion of Herod. To gain Antonius' support for her expansionist ambitions at the expense of Judaea, she sought to undermine Herod's importance as a client king in his estimation. Cleopatra also became involved in plots with Herod's foes in Judaea, indeed within his own palace, for his overthrow. Because of Antonius' relationship with her, Herod could neither denounce Cleopatra as a troublemaker nor dare take any direct steps against her. Cleopatra thus became a perennial thorn in Herod's side that continually threatened his wellbeing, exacerbating his feelings of vulnerability and thereby contributing significantly to his growing paranoia.

Cleopatra's meddling in Herod's affairs began shortly after he mounted the throne of Judaea. Herod's marriage into the Hasmonean family, undertaken for exclusively domestic political reasons, now began to have significant ramifications. As already indicated, from Herod's standpoint the marriage to Mariamme was an important factor in his gaining acceptability as successor to the Judaean throne. However, that does not explain why the Hasmoneans, and particularly Mariamme's family, agreed to the match, since Herod's regal aspirations surely did not serve Hasmonean interests.

The key to answering this riddle is Mariamme's mother Alexandra. She was the only child of Hyrcanus, who had no male heir. Alexandra had married her cousin Alexander, the son of Aristobulus II, the brother of Hyrcanus. Both her husband and father-in-law had been executed by order of Pompeius, but not before she had borne a son, Aristobulus III, and a daughter, Mariamme. As seen in the preceding chapters, there was great enmity between the branches of the Hasmonean house represented by Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II, respectively. With the death of Aristobulus and Alexander, Alexandra's brother-in-law Antigonus headed their branch of the family. Alexandra was obsessed with the fear that should Antigonus one day succeed in replacing Hyrcanus as ethnarch and high priest, as he in fact did, the life of her only son Aristobulus would be forfeit, because as Hyrcanus' grandson he would remain a viable contender for the dual offices. It thus appears that Alexandra believed it to be in her immediate interest to see Herod as ruler of Judaea in preference to her brother-in-law Antigonus. Presumably, her reasoning was that since Herod was ineligible by birth to serve as high priest, he would have no objection to seeing that august position filled by his wife Mariamme's younger brother Aristobulus. Accordingly, it seems that Alexandra encouraged the marriage of Mariamme to Herod as a means of securing the high priesthood for her son Aristobulus, perhaps hoping that he might later succeed Herod on the throne.

However, once Herod actually became king of Judaea, he considered it to be politically unwise, if not dangerous, to appoint a Hasmonean to such a prominent public position as that of high priest, since this could pose a threat to the security of his throne. Indeed, Herod saw it as in his interest to lower the status of the high priesthood, to eliminate it as a base of contending power. He wanted to bring the office under his personal control, even though he could not wear the miter himself. Herod proposed to achieve this by eliminating the traditional life tenure of the office and opening it to appointees from priestly families other than the Hasmoneans, who would serve in the office at his pleasure. To emphasize the new regime governing the high priesthood, Herod placed the sacred vestments of the high priest under his personal supervision, to be released to the incumbent only on the four occasions during the year when they were worn by the high priest in public worship. The vestments, which had great symbolic significance, were placed in a fortress-palace that Herod built near the Temple, which he named the Antonia, in honor of his Roman patron.

To give practical effect to the new regime of the Temple, Herod deliberately bypassed his brother-in-law, the Hasmonean Aristobulus, and appointed Hananel, an obscure priest from Mesopotamia, to the office of high priest. Hananel, without roots in Judaea, was completely dependent on Herod for his position, the most desirable arrangement from the king's standpoint. Needless to say, Alexandra was livid over the affair. She became determined to undo Hananel's appointment and turned to Cleopatra for help. Aware of Cleopatra's deep resentment of Herod, she implored the Egyptian queen to use her influence with Antonius to have him force Herod to rescind his decision and appoint Aristobulus to the high priesthood. Cleopatra was only too pleased to have an opportunity to embarrass and undermine Herod and became a staunch advocate of Alexandra's cause.

Before long, Cleopatra succeeded in convincing Antonius to intervene on Aristobulus' behalf, even though the designation of a high priest was really an internal Judaean matter that he should have left to Herod's discretion. To further complicate matters, Antonius wrote to Herod urging him to send the young Hasmonean prince to spend some time with him in the meanwhile. This placed Herod in an extremely awkward position. On the one hand, he could ill afford simply to ignore Antonius' requests, since he was in reality the latter's vassal. However, sending Aristobulus to the court of Antonius and Cleopatra entailed risks that he simply could not accept. For one thing, Aristobulus, who was a very attractive young man, might find favor with Antonius or, perhaps even worse, with Cleopatra. Should this happen, Antonius might decide to groom him to be Herod's successor at some future

date, a course that Cleopatra would probably wholeheartedly lend her support to. Second, the very possibility of this happening would lend encouragement to the Hasmonean loyalists whom Herod had just barely managed to suppress, and perhaps trigger a revolt against him. Accordingly, Herod refused to give permission to Aristobulus to leave the country, and justified it to Antonius on the basis that the popular prince's departure might be misunderstood and would probably cause civil unrest.

Herod realized that he could only stall Antonius for a short while before the latter became enraged at his failure to comply with the triumvir's, that is, Cleopatra's request. Caught in a dilemma to which there apparently was no satisfactory solution, Herod ultimately concluded that it was preferable to make Aristobulus high priest than run the risks that might be engendered by sending him to stay with Antonius and Cleopatra.

To save face in the affair, Herod took steps to make it appear as though he himself had voluntarily made the decision to elevate Aristobulus to the high priesthood. As part of this charade, he convened a state council, made up of friends and supporters, before which he charged Alexandra with sedition and treason. She had, he claimed, conspired with Cleopatra to overthrow his government. Herod then asserted that he had always intended to appoint Aristobulus to the high priesthood, but had deferred doing so before because the Hasmonean prince was too young. He then dismissed Hananel from the sacerdotal office and appointed Aristobulus in his place. The net outcome of the whole business was that Herod established a new and dangerous precedent. By his machinations, Herod had transformed the high priesthood from a hereditary office into a political instrument to be manipulated to serve the interests of Judaea's rulers. The significance of this change was not lost on the Romans who later took the power of such appointment out of Judaean hands and gave it to the Roman procurators.

Cleopatra's successful intervention in Herod's domestic political affairs only whetted her appetite for other initiatives that might yield further territorial gains at Judaea's expense. Upon their marriage, Antonius gave Cleopatra the greater part of the Phoenician and Palestinian coastal regions, along with Chalcis and Cyprus, as a wedding gift. However, these acquisitions did not fully satisfy Cleopatra's passion for territory and power. Her overriding ambition was to restore the borders of Egypt to what they had been at the time of Ptolemy Philadelphus. Indeed, she named the son born of her marriage to Antonius, Ptolemy Philadelphus. At the time of the first Philadelphus, the Egyptian Empire included Coele-Syria, Nabataea, and Judaea; and Cleopatra asked that these lands be given to her now. Under ordinary circumstances Antonius probably would have acceded to her request, notwithstanding his

high regard for Herod. However, the prevailing political realities prevented him from doing so at a time when he was in the process of preparing for a long-awaited campaign against the Parthians. Antonius could not afford to take the risk of exposing his rear in Nabataea and Judaea to the disturbances that would most probably take place there if he had arbitrarily transferred those territories to Egypt while he was preoccupied with Parthia. Moreover, he remembered quite well the problems created for him by an earlier Parthian-Judaean alliance, which might be repeated if he betrayed Herod as Cleopatra urged. At least for the moment, he had no wish to create new complications that might divert his attention from the coming war with Parthia.

The moment seemed opportune for Antonius to make extensive inroads into Asia that no Roman before him had achieved. Following the death of the prince Pacorus, who was killed during the unsuccessful invasion of Syria in 39 B.C.E., the grief-stricken Parthian king Orodes abdicated and turned the throne over to another son, Phraates IV, who promptly wiped out the entire royal family to secure his succession against any future challenges. He also lashed out against the nobility, causing one of them, Monaeses, to appeal to Antonius for help. Antonius was led to believe that the majority of the Parthian elite would welcome a Roman intervention, since they were themselves preparing an insurrection against the tyrannical Phraates. Intrigued by the prospect of an easy victory against a traditional foe on his own territory, Antonius co-opted the assistance of the client king Artavasdes of Armenia and crossed the Euphrates into Media Atropatene in 36 with an army of about 100,000 men.

Perhaps expecting more help from the disgruntled Parthian nobles than he was to receive, Antonius apparently became overconfident and made some unwise tactical decisions that cost the Romans dearly. By unnecessarily splitting his forces and engaging in a premature siege of Praaspa, the provincial capital of Media Atropatene, Antonius left himself exposed to an attack on his slower moving supply train to the rear. Phraates seized the opportunity presented and pounced on the supply column with overwhelming force. About 10,000 legionnaires were killed and the supplies for the main body of the Roman army were captured. At this point, the Armenian forces defected, leaving the Roman commander stranded far from his own lines and desperately short of supplies. The Parthians reaped maximum benefit from his untenable position by mounting a campaign of attrition against his forces as they withdrew to Syria through Armenia. By the time Antonius reached safety, he had lost a third of his army without ever having fought a pitched battle.

Antonius' debacle made Herod extremely apprehensive about a possible Parthian invasion of Syria. He could not forget that Hyrcanus II was still living

in exile in Parthia, where he was treated with honor by the king and where he also received the homage and respect of the large Jewish communities of Mesopotamia. Herod was afraid that the Parthians might repeat the earlier scenario when they deposed Hyrcanus and installed Antigonus as king of Judaea, except that now they might decide to restore Hyrcanus to the throne. Even though Hyrcanus could not serve as high priest because of his disfigurement, there was nothing to prevent him from ruling as king if the Romans were defeated. Herod concluded that the only way he could ensure his future was to get his hands on Hyrcanus. This would also serve Antonius' interests, since Hyrcanus, who was still widely respected in Judaea, could be exploited by the Parthians as a counter to the unpopular Herod, thereby undermining the Roman position in the country. With the blessing of Antonius whose permission was necessary to assure safe passage through the Roman lines, Herod sent an emissary to convince Hyrcanus to return to Judaea as his honored guest. Needless to say, Herod planned to do away with him at the appropriate moment.

In the meantime, on the Feast of Tabernacles in the year 36 B.C.E., the 17-year-old Aristobulus performed his functions as high priest in the Temple for the first time. A striking figure, his appearance evoked much popular approbation. His warm reception by the people convinced Herod that he was indeed a threat to the throne and had to be eliminated, regardless of Antonius' wishes in the matter. To Herod, who apparently was reaching new heights of paranoia, Aristobulus constituted a greater threat to him than his Roman overlord. Shortly after the festival, he invited Aristobulus and his mother Alexandra to the summer palace at Jericho. There, while Aristobulus was bathing in the pool, Herod had his servants drown him, making it look like an accident.

Alexandra, beside herself with grief, was convinced that Herod was behind the accident and became determined to avenge her son's death. She turned to Cleopatra once more. The Egyptian queen was delighted with the opportunity to intervene on Alexandra's behalf again, particularly in this instance where Herod had acted in clear defiance of Antonius by killing Aristobulus. Cleopatra strongly urged Antonius to take punitive action against him. However, as much as Antonius was inclined to do as Cleopatra wished, his political intuition told him that the timing was wrong for the sort of measures she had in mind. Antonius had no illusions about Herod's popularity in Judaea and must have realized that a move against him by the Romans would serve to unleash a torrent of popular fury against his entire regime and its supporters, resulting in serious disturbances in a Roman client state that was now at peace. Having just undergone the humiliation of his disastrous Parthian campaign, Antonius had no wish to make things worse by also appearing in Rome as unable to maintain order in his own backyard.

Nonetheless, Antonius summoned Herod to appear before him at Laodicea to answer for his actions. Herod had no choice but to respond positively to the summons and went armed with lavish gifts for Antonius as well as Cleopatra. The substance of their conversation at the time is not known, but Herod apparently assuaged whatever anger Antonius may have felt and regained his confidence, probably by arguing that his actions were necessary to prevent a mass uprising against Roman suzerainty in the expectation of a Hasmonean revival. However, to placate Cleopatra, and possibly to deliver a clear message to Herod that further unilateral action of the kind that he took against Aristobulus would be unpardonable, Antonius detached Jericho from Herod's domains and awarded it to the Egyptian queen. Thus, he not only gave her the most fertile area of Judaea, but also extended her reach uncomfortably close to Jerusalem, a serious act of encroachment from Herod's standpoint. At the same time, Antonius also gave Cleopatra a commercially important section of Nabataea, the center of its bitumen deposits located near the eastern shore of the Dead Sea, that was to play an important role in subsequent developments in the area.

These territorial acquisitions failed to satisfy Cleopatra who remained openly hostile to Herod, and who continued to engage in conspiracies to bring him down. A case in point was her intriguing with Herod's Idumaean military governor, Costobarus, who sought to have Idumaea detached from Judaea and handed over to the Egyptian queen. Costobarus presumably believed that Cleopatra would then appoint him as its governor, a position from which he eventually would be able to transform the country into an independent state. It seems certain that Herod became aware of the conspiracy, but did not dare have Costobarus eliminated out of fear of Cleopatra, in addition to his concern about the reaction in Judaea and Idumaea where Costobarus was quite popular. Instead, Herod sought to bring him into his embrace by arranging for Costobarus to marry his loyal sister Salome, whom he expected to keep a watchful eye on her husband.

In 34, Antonius left for a campaign in Armenia and Cleopatra accompanied him as far as the Euphrates. On her return home she planned to make her first visit to Jericho, her newest territorial acquisition. Herod was concerned that Cleopatra's presence in Judaea would provide an occasion for a direct meeting between her and Alexandra, at which he expected that they would probably hatch a new conspiracy against him. He was anxious to prevent such a meeting and therefore went to meet Cleopatra at the Judaean border, where he made her a very attractive business proposition. He offered to lease the district of Jericho from her for an annual rent of 200 talents. Moreover, because he did not want her to establish an Egyptian administration in her pocket of land in neighboring Nabataea, he also proposed to guarantee the payment of another

200 talents annually by the king of Nabataea, Malichus. This would permit the latter to retain control of Nabataea's regional monopoly of the bitumen industry. Herod's offer proved quite acceptable to Cleopatra who would earn a considerable sum annually without incurring any expenses whatever. She was also surely pleased by the opportunity it provided for intrigue to bring the Judaeans and Nabataeans, whose territory she coveted, into conflict with one another. It was shortly after this that Herod and Judaea were to be drawn into the swirl of events that brought about momentous changes in the course of Roman as well as world history.

Since Antonius' return to the east, and particularly after his marriage to Cleopatra, his behavior began to engender considerable annoyance and resentment in Italy. He had assumed the attitude as well as the dress of an oriental potentate and had begun celebrating his victories in Alexandria instead of Rome. It was not long before his reputation in Rome had deteriorated to the point where Octavian believed that the time was ripe to take action against him. In 32 B.C.E., Antonius finally divorced Octavia; and Octavian, who could never forgive Antonius for putting aside his sister in favor of Cleopatra, openly denounced him in the Senate. Then, in the latter part of that year, he contrived to have war declared against the Egyptian queen. Octavian, who was still uncertain of the extent of his popularity, was careful not to have the declaration directed against Antonius, but the transparency of the device was evident to all. Antonius came to be regarded as an unwitting tool of Cleopatra's imperial ambitions. His election to the consulate in 31 was annulled, and the Senate revoked his authority to act in the name of Rome.

The net result of all this was that Antonius and Octavian were now to become locked in a power struggle that would determine the future of Rome. As one historian of the period suggested, "The policy and ambitions of Antonius or of Cleopatra were not the true cause of the War of Actium, they were a pretext in the strife for power, the magnificent lie upon which was built the supremacy of Caesar's heir and the resurgent nation of Italy. Yet, for all that, the contest soon assumed the august and solemn form of a war of ideas and a war between East and West. Antonius and Cleopatra seem merely pawns in the game of destiny. The weapon forged to destroy Antonius changed the shape of the whole world."[1]

Apparently oblivious to what was really at stake for her husband as well as for herself in the war that erupted between Antonius and Octavian, Cleopatra sought to exploit the occasion to pursue her own immediate interests. She did this even though her very own future was critically dependent on Antonius' victory in the struggle. As a result, in the spring of 31, when the forces of Antonius and Cleopatra were about to clash with the armies of Octavian and

Antonius summoned all his client kings to join him, three of the latter were absent. One was Polemon of Pontus, whom Antonius had assigned the responsibility for protecting his flank in Asia. The other two were Herod and Malichus of Nabataea. It seems that Cleopatra was so blinded by her animosity to Herod that she was opposed to his lending direct support to Antonius in the coming battle with Octavian. She did not want Antonius to feel any obligation toward the Judaean king for his loyalty and service in a time of crisis. It was evidently her intention to claim Judaea as her portion of the spoil at the end of the war, which she expected to win. Since she could not make such an argument to Antonius, she found another means of achieving her wish.

It happened that Malichus was in arrears with regard to his annual payment to Cleopatra for the lease of the Nabataean bitumen monopoly. Cleopatra somehow prevailed upon Antonius, even at this critical time, to order Herod to march against Malichus to force him to pay, thus depriving Antonius of Judaean forces in his war with Octavian. Apparently, it was not the struggle with Octavian that was uppermost in Cleopatra's mind, but her wish to see Herod and Malichus bleed each other, perhaps to the point where she might be able to take over their territories without too much difficulty.

Herod, ever responsive to Antonius, duly invaded Nabataea in the spring of 31. As he appeared to be emerging victorious from the very first engagement of the campaign, one of Cleopatra's generals, Athenion, who must have been prepositioned in the vicinity, suddenly attacked Herod's troops, inflicting many casualties. Taking advantage of this turn of events, the Nabataean army rallied and completely routed the Judaean forces. Herod was unable to regain the initiative and was forced to resort to guerrilla warfare to keep the Nabataeans off balance. At the same time a major earthquake struck Judaea, causing great loss of life. Under the circumstances, Herod felt compelled to sue for peace and sent plenipotentiaries to negotiate a settlement. The Nabataeans, for reasons that are not clear, elected to murder the envoys, perhaps on the basis of a mistaken conviction that the Judaean army had been destroyed in the disaster and that there were no longer any incentives for negotiations. They were mistaken. Herod was able revitalize his troops, assuring them that except for Egyptian interference they would have won the battle with the Nabataeans. The Judaeans then crossed the Jordan and attacked the Nabataean army, routing them in a battle near Philadelphia (Amman). Malichus sued for peace, but this time Herod refused and continued the assault until he had completely crushed the Nabataean army. It is noteworthy that Athenion did not interfere this time, raising the suspicion of some scholars that the story of the first Egyptian intervention was a fiction created to explain Herod's defeat.

Of course, any number of factors could have prevented Athenion from repeating what was a quite plausible intervention, given Cleopatra's purposes. One reasonable possibility is that Herod's second attack took place at a time when the outcome of the battle of Actium on September 2, 31, was already clear. Antonius' land forces were blockaded and Octavian's navy significantly outnumbered the combined fleets of Antonius and Cleopatra. The situation appeared increasingly hopeless, and it seems clear from what took place that Antonius sought to break out of the stranglehold imposed by Octavian and flee to Egypt where he hoped to rebuild his forces once more.

The treasure that was needed to finance a continuation of the struggle was loaded on Cleopatra's flagship. And, at the height of the battle, Cleopatra fled the scene with 60 ships and made for Alexandria, with Antonius following with what remained of his fleet after holding off the enemy so that she could make her escape. With their defection from the battle the tide of victory shifted decisively in favor of Octavian. Although the battle of Actium was by no means a decisive military victory, it was conclusive politically. Contrary to Antonius' orders to his land armies, which were still intact, to make for Syria through Greece, Macedonia, and Asia Minor, their commanders soon negotiated a peace settlement with Octavian. Even the five legions he had stationed in Cyrene, in North Africa, had switched allegiances to Octavian. This left the almost despondent Antonius without a viable military option. The inevitability of Octavian's victory was so patent that, instead of pursuing Antonius to Egypt to complete his defeat, Octavian returned to Rome immediately after the battle at Actium to attend to the consolidation of his political position in the capital. It was now only a question of time before total victory over Antonius was to be realized.

No sooner was word received of Antonius' defeat at Actium than Herod began to distance himself from his benefactor. Indeed, even Cleopatra was prepared to transfer her affections from Antonius to Octavian, but the latter would have nothing to do with her. The fact that Herod had not participated directly in the war, thanks to Cleopatra, made it easier for him to switch allegiances. Herod took the initiative in an attempt to appease Octavian. Having heard that gladiators who had been training at Cyzicus were on their way from Asia Minor to Egypt to assist Antonius, Herod intervened by helping Didius, the governor of Syria, prevent them from linking up with Antonius' forces. When Antonius learned of Herod's defection, he sent a trusted friend, Alexas the Laodicean, to urge him to remain loyal but his overture was rejected. The die was cast, and Herod's primary concern was for his own survival in a Roman world dominated by Octavian.

Clearly identified as a protégé and ally of Antonius, Herod had good reason to fear for both his life and his throne. He was particularly concerned that Hasmonean loyalists might appeal to Octavian, reminding the Roman ruler that his revered father by adoption, Julius Caesar, had assigned hereditary rule over the Judaeans to Hyrcanus, who was now present in Judaea. To rid himself of this threat, Herod quickly charged Hyrcanus with treason before a council of friends and supporters. Not surprisingly, the former high priest and ethnarch was convicted, on the basis of contrived evidence, of an alleged conspiracy with the Nabataeans. Hyrcanus was duly condemned to death and executed.

In the spring of 30 B.C.E., Octavian returned to the east from Rome to complete his victory over Antonius and Cleopatra and stopped at Rhodes on his way to Egypt. Herod, too, went to Rhodes laden with gifts in an effort to salvage his throne. To Herod's delight, Octavian appeared to be most magnanimous to most of the client kings who had formerly been loyal to Antonius. After all, Antonius had represented Rome in the east and their faithfulness to him could be construed as loyalty to Rome. Now that Octavian was ruler of Rome, he could reasonably expect that their loyalties would be transferred to him. Accordingly, Herod, who had not participated in the battle of Actium, was reconfirmed as king of Judaea, just as Archelaus of Cappadocia and Polemon of Pontus, who had supplied troops to Antonius, were both reconfirmed as rulers of their respective lands.

As Octavian marched south from Syria toward Egypt in the summer of 30, Herod entertained him lavishly and provided the Roman army with supplies for their trek across the Sinai desert. When Octavian approached the Egyptian frontier, Cleopatra secretly sent him a golden crown and scepter, hoping to gain his favor; but Octavian simply accepted the gift without making any commitments. He reached Alexandria unopposed by July 31, where a final battle with Antonius took place. It was a debacle for Antonius who was deserted by much of his army as well as that of Cleopatra. Antonius, followed shortly by Cleopatra, committed suicide, and an era came to an end.

NOTE

1. Ronald Syme, *The Roman Revolution*, p. 275.

Chapter 11

Herod and Augustus Caesar

The death of Cleopatra was a signal event for Herod. She was an implacable enemy who was beyond his reach and, therefore, was a persistent threat to his security. Because of her influence with Antonius, Herod was even limited in his freedom of action to deal with his internal enemies. Now, at last, he was free of her. Octavian restored the district of Jericho, given by Antonius to Cleopatra, to Judaea and further augmented its territory by the addition of the towns of Gadara, Hippus, and Samaria, as well as the important maritime towns of Antheton, Gaza, Jaffa, and Straton's Tower. Octavian also gave Herod a bodyguard of 400 Gauls who had previously belonged to Cleopatra. All in all, Herod emerged far stronger from Antonius' defeat than he would have from his victory. For the first time since he mounted the throne, he felt secure enough to take unrestrained vengeance on his internal foes, and he did so with relish. He carried out a bloody purge over the next three years that resulted in the execution of his wife Mariamme, his mother-in-law Alexandra, and his brother-in-law Costobarus among many others.

Octavian, who professed great reverence for ancient Roman constitutional forms, nonetheless proceeded to consolidate a monopoly of supreme power in the state and soon transformed the republic into an Oriental-style principate. As described by Tacitus,

> Augustus [the title conferred on Octavian by the Senate in 27 B.C.E.] won over the soldiers with gifts, the populace with cheap corn, and all men with the sweets of repose . . .

while he concentrated in himself the functions of the Senate, the magistrates, and the laws. He was wholly unopposed, for the boldest spirits had fallen in battle, or in the proscription, while the remaining nobles, the readier they were to be slaves, were raised the higher by wealth and promotion, so that, aggrandised by revolution, they preferred the safety of the present to the dangerous past. Nor did the provinces dislike that condition of affairs, for they distrusted the government of the Senate and the people, because of the rivalries between the leading men and the rapacity of the officials, while the protection of the laws was unavailing, as they were continually deranged by violence, intrigue, and finally by corruption.[1]

Of particular interest was the policy Octavian or Augustus Caesar adopted with respect to the Roman Empire in the east. At the close of the Egyptian campaign, Augustus renounced the plans of both Julius Caesar and Antonius for extending Roman rule beyond the Euphrates. He considered it a hopeless cause, one that would involve Rome in inconclusive and endless conflict with the Parthians, a struggle that would bleed it dry without providing any commensurate gains. Given the extent of the Arabian desert, which reached northward as far as the outskirts of Aleppo, the major parts of the Roman Empire in the east, Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt, were linked together only by the narrow coastal strip of Phoenicia and Palestine. Accordingly, one of the essential elements in Augustus' eastern policy was the establishment and maintenance of a stable regime in the latter coastal region. Within this policy framework, Herod would surely be considered a major asset with his history of unwavering allegiance to Rome. As Herod subsequently proved his value to Augustus, he was rewarded with further additions of territory, and his sway soon extended to Damascus and the sources of the Jordan; the territory now governed from Jerusalem was the most extensive in the long history of the Jewish nation.

To achieve the goals of regional security and internal stability set for him by Augustus, Herod dramatically improved the defenses of Jerusalem and imposed a regime designed to overawe the restive populace with the power of the state. He also established a military colony in Samaria for the same purpose. A string of impressive fortifications sprang up throughout the country. Most were formidable hilltop strongholds that were either reconditioned Hasmonean fortresses or newly constructed bastions. In addition to Antonia and Herod's new fortified palace in Jerusalem, there were three other major military centers in Judaea that guarded the capital: Hyrcania to the west, and the new fortresses of Cypros, which dominated the Wadi Qelt near Jericho, and Herodion, some eight miles south of Jerusalem. In the north, Alexandrion kept watch on Samaria. Guarding the Nabataean frontier was the virtually impregnable mountain redoubt at Masada, which was supported by a network of forts stretching westward from the southern end of the Dead Sea toward Gaza.

The eastern frontier in Peraea, across the Jordan, was controlled from the fortresses of Machaerus and a second Herodion. In keeping with his perennial concerns about internal security, particularly an insurrection that might force him to withdraw from Jerusalem, Herod arranged for the construction of palatial quarters and the storage of adequate supplies for a long siege in five of these fortresses. At the same time, to help keep the population in tow, he established a vast network of spies and imposed severe restrictions on the freedom of assembly. In brief, he transformed Judaea into a police state under which force and repression became the ultimate basis of his authority.

However, notwithstanding his harsh regime, Herod also took steps to improve trade and commerce and to enhance the productivity and wealth of the country. A magnificent harbor was built at Straton's Tower, which was soon to replace Jerusalem as the administrative capital of Judaea. Herod could also be magnanimous, as long as there was no challenge to his absolute authority. He undertook to care for the poor, the infirm, and the aged, and when necessary was prepared to strip the royal treasury to care for the people, something quite rare among monarchs and autocrats in any age. In other words, Herod was a man of extreme contradictions. He was psychopathically paranoid with respect to the security of his regime and extremely forthcoming with regard to the general well-being of the people and the country. Above all, Herod, whose legitimacy derived entirely from Rome rather than from the Judaeans, was completely loyal to Augustus and responsive to his every wish. As far as Rome was concerned, he was the model of an ideal client ruler.

Although Herod, well aware of the preferences of his people, might have wished to insulate Judaea from clearly troublesome cultural developments in the Roman world, he was unable to do so. The vast empire that Augustus presided over appeared unified but actually lacked internal cohesion. What held it together were Roman arms. It was a state built and maintained by force. But this was a very costly basis for the empire, and Augustus sought an alternate method of establishing Rome's authority among the diverse nations and peoples under his control. His aim was to reduce the role of the Roman legions as the primary means of securing loyalty to the imperial standard. Toward this end Augustus adopted a policy of cultural imperialism designed to instill Graeco-Roman tastes, habits, customs, and general culture in the non-Hellenized portions of the empire. He evidently hoped to bring about greater political cohesion and acceptance of the legitimacy of Roman rule by creating common cultural ties between Rome and the various nations and ethnic groups under imperial rule.

Herod, who gave himself the title of "Admirer of the Romans" (*Philoromaios*) and who felt that he had no alternative but to cooperate fully

with the Augustan program, proceeded enthusiastically to impart a Graeco-Roman character to his state and devoted considerable resources to the project. His efforts went quite smoothly in the essentially gentile parts of his realm. There, in furtherance of the imperial cult, he built splendid temples that were dedicated to Augustus. He introduced Roman theater and constructed amphitheaters where spectacles were staged to amuse the populace; the roads were lined with Roman monuments, and numerous towns were given Roman names, particularly those of the imperial family. Samaria was renamed Sebaste (the Greek equivalent of Augustus) and Straton's Tower became Caesarea.

In Judaea proper, Herod proceeded much more cautiously. He was undoubtedly well aware of the volatile history of attempts at Hellenization in the country and had no wish to provoke radical resistance to his program from the generally conservative religious leaders. Nonetheless, he constructed a huge amphitheater near Jerusalem where the games instituted by Augustus in commemoration of his victory at Actium were celebrated. Gladiatorial contests and chariot races were staged there on such a grand scale that they drew visitors from all parts of the empire. The character of Jerusalem soon began to change dramatically as it became home to large numbers of foreign envoys, retainers, and mercenaries. Herod's court itself became a center for Greek orators and writers who gave it a distinctly non-Jewish cultural flavor.

However, Herod remained always conscious of the fact that his Graeco-Roman cultural program was deeply resented by many Judaeans as being completely offensive to Jewish religious sensibilities, and, in order to contain public discontent, he attempted to make it clear that he was acting under external compulsion. Although there is sufficient evidence that he embraced the Augustan program quite willingly, in many respects feeling far more comfortable in gentile than in Jewish society, he was too shrewd a statesman to push his Graeco-Roman cultural schemes beyond the limits of toleration of the Jewish community. He had no wish to provoke the equivalent of a Hasmonean revival. As long as he avoided directly provoking the Pharisees and stirring them to political action, they preferred to devote themselves to the religious life. They were prepared, as a practical matter, to accept Roman hegemony as long as they were left free to worship and live as they chose.

Augustus thus had good reason to be fully satisfied with Herod's performance as a client king, and he considered him a bulwark of the empire in the east. Herod was included among those rulers who were designated "friends and allies of the Roman people" (*socii et amici populi Romani*) whose principal task was to maintain order within the borders of their respective countries. They were denied the right to take any initiatives in foreign affairs, and those who dared do so paid dearly for their temerity. Thus, when the Ituraean prince and

high priest Zenodorus, ruler of the districts of Auranitis, Batanaea, and Trachonitis, northeast of Judaea, was found guilty of pillaging neighboring territories, Augustus awarded his districts to Herod, further enlarging the kingdom of Judaea. Zenodorus then attempted to prevent the transfer by selling the Hauran for 50 talents to the king of Nabataea. The latter wanted it in order to secure the caravan route through his territory to Damascus, but Augustus refused to accept the validity of the transaction and insisted upon the territorial transfer to Herod. When Zenodorus died about the year 21 B.C.E., Herod was permitted to annex the remainder of his territories that lay between Trachonitis and Galilee, including Paneas and the sources of the Jordan River.

Upon Herod's request, Augustus granted his brother Pheroras the tetrarchy of Peraea in Transjordan. Herod was also given the distinctive honor, for a client king, of being designated as a counselor to the governors of Syria. At the same time, however, the governors of Syria also served to some extent as the informal overlords of Judaea. Herod had to defer to their judgment and advice with regard to matters that affected Judaea's ability to fulfil its assigned role in assuring the security and stability of the Roman Empire in the east.

Despite his relatively high standing in Rome as an effective and reliable client king, Herod was nonetheless plagued by feelings of insecurity. He was unpopular with the Judaeans and he became determined to win their support by exploiting their religious sensibilities, particularly with respect to the Temple and the prevalent expectations of the approach of the messianic era. At the time, there was a popular belief that the appearance of the Messiah would be heralded by the erection of a more splendid Temple to replace the edifice that then existed in Jerusalem. This belief was articulated in contemporary works such as the *Book of Enoch*: "The Lord of the sheep brought a new house greater and loftier than that first, and set it up in the place of the first which had been folded up."[2] Herod now proposed to turn this popular belief to his political advantage.

In the year 20, he summoned a great assembly of the people to announce his intention of rebuilding and greatly expanding the Temple. At first, the announcement was greeted with dismay. Many were afraid that Herod intended to tear down the old Temple and then find that he did not have the resources or materials with which to build a new one. But Herod soon won over the people and the massive project was undertaken, at one point employing some 18,000 workers. However, notwithstanding the general public satisfaction with the project, Herod never enjoyed more than a brief moment of popularity. He would always be considered an outsider and intruder in the Judaean world, even though he had wide acceptance in Samaria and Galilee, and among the Jews of the Diaspora who saw him as their protector.

Herod's paranoia and the bizarre palace politics that fed it exacerbated his internal problems, and soon involved the Romans as well. Underlying Herod's domestic autonomy as a client king was the principle that he could not carry out any actions that might affect the political future of Judaea without the consent of the emperor. This restriction included all matters directly involving the lives and safety of the members of the royal family. As it turned out, Herod's dynastic problems were such as to intimately involve Augustus in Judaea's internal affairs.

Herod's two sons Alexander and Aristobulus, by Mariamme the Hasmonean, had been sent to Rome when they came of age to complete their education, and he went there in 17 to see Augustus and to bring his children home. Upon the return of the young princes to Jerusalem, they were idolized by the public as descendants of the Hasmoneans and prospective heirs to the Judaean throne. As such, they posed a serious threat to Herod's brother Pheroras, who wanted the throne for himself. Their presence also re-awakened the longstanding hatred of Herod's sister Salome for the Hasmoneans; Salome had been instrumental in turning Herod against his Hasmonean wife Mariamme.

Herod soon married off Aristobulus to his niece Berenice, the daughter of Salome by the slain Costobarus. It was a deft political move designed to unite the Herodian and Hasmonean branches of the royal family. Despite her hatred of Aristobulus, Salome interposed no objection to the marriage since it afforded her the opportunity to spy on the young prince as well as to plot against him. Alexander too was drawn into a political marriage to Glaphyra, the daughter of Archelaus Sisinnes, king of Cappadocia, as a means of cementing the latter's alliance with Herod.

Then, in 14 B.C.E., Herod left Judaea for Asia Minor to provide support to Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa, the son-in-law and right hand of Augustus Caesar, who was involved in settling affairs in the kingdom of Bosporus. No sooner did he leave the country than the latent tensions within the palace bubbled to the surface. Herod's sons Aristobulus and Alexander made it quite evident that they had neither forgotten nor forgiven all those who conspired to have their mother executed, and Salome had no doubt that she topped their list of candidates for elimination. They also made no secret of the less than filial feelings that they harbored for their father.

Upon Herod's return, Pheroras and Salome began to undermine his confidence in the loyalty of his sons by raising suspicions about their intentions. They assured him that he was in danger from both Aristobulus and Alexander, who had threatened to exact revenge for the death of their mother. Moreover, they alleged that Alexander, in collusion with his father-in-law Archelaus of

Cappadocia, was planning to bring charges of murder against Herod before the emperor. It did not take too much to persuade Herod of the danger to himself, even though there was no evidence that either Alexander or Aristobulus ever contemplated doing any real harm to their father. Herod decided to shake their self-confidence by raising the question as to whether they would in fact succeed him on the throne. He did this by recalling to the palace his eldest son Antipater, the child of his first wife Doris, whom he married while still a commoner and whom he divorced in favor of Mariamme so that he might be in a better position to win the crown of Judaea. By contrast with his half-brothers, Antipater was completely ruthless and probably would not have hesitated to murder Herod if by such an act he could seize the throne for himself.

In the year 13, as Vipsanius Agrippa was returning to Rome from the east, Herod brought Antipater to him and requested that his son be permitted to accompany him to Rome and be presented before the emperor. This ploy was intended to send a clear signal to Alexander and Aristobulus that they had fallen out of Herod's favor and might no longer be in contention for the succession. The following year Herod took the final step of having Alexander and Aristobulus accompany him to Aquileia in northern Italy, where Augustus was staying, and directly accused them of treason before the emperor. His sons were in shock, but Alexander noticed that Augustus did not appear overly troubled by Herod's charges. Augustus evidently was well informed as to what had been going on in Herod's palace and was not especially surprised by his action. The emperor's demeanor served to encourage Alexander, who happened to be a good orator. He deftly refuted his father's accusations against him and his brother without attributing any blame directly to Herod. The speech appeared to have the desired effect on Augustus as well as Herod himself, and the emperor soon brought about reconciliation between Herod and his sons. At the same time Augustus reaffirmed Herod's privilege, an exceptional grant to a Roman client king, of freely choosing his own successor, albeit subject to final confirmation by the emperor.

Upon his return to Jerusalem, Herod announced that Antipater would succeed him on the throne and that Alexander and Aristobulus would be next in line of succession after their older half-brother. To give additional legitimacy to Antipater, Herod arranged his marriage to the daughter of Antigonus, the last Hasmonean to sit on the Judaean throne. Nonetheless, Herod's solution to his dynastic problems really accomplished very little since all the pertinent actors were dissatisfied. Instead, it actually precipitated a period of seemingly endless palace plots and counterplots that undermined the stability of the regime and involved the Romans ever more deeply in Judaean affairs.

A particularly outstanding instance of this was the matter of the affair involving Salome and Syllaeus, the powerful vizier of the Nabataean king Obodas. The young Nabataean became enamored with the much older sister of Herod while he was visiting Judaea and he later asked the king for Salome's hand in marriage. It seemed evident to Herod that there was more than romance behind the request. Syllaeus was plotting to murder Obodas and become king of Nabataea. Syllaeus was concerned, however, with the probable repercussions from the Romans. Aware of Herod's unique standing with the emperor, Syllaeus had hoped to gain his support by becoming his brother-in-law, thereby strengthening the relationship between Judaea and Nabataea. Herod, on the other hand, had no interest in bringing this scheming young man into his embrace, much preferring the presence of the weak Obodas on the Nabataean throne. He therefore sought to bring the whole troublesome affair to an end and accomplished this by demanding that Syllaeus accept Judaism as a precondition for Herod's approval of his marriage to Salome. Since there was no prospect that, if he did as Herod insisted, he could ever mount the Nabataean throne, Syllaeus rejected the precondition. At the time, Salome, in her only known act of discord with her brother, appealed directly to the empress Livia, the wife of Augustus, to intercede with Herod on her behalf. Livia, however, was disinclined to get involved in such a politically delicate matter and advised Salome to do as Herod wished. While Herod thereby settled one problem, he created another; namely, Syllaeus' unrelenting enmity.

Syllaeus took his revenge on Herod by aiding and abetting the instability that was growing in the northeastern part of the latter's kingdom. The people of Trachonitis had never fully reconciled themselves to Herod's rule over their lands, even though it was Augustus himself who had transferred them to Judaea. While Herod was visiting Italy again in 12 B.C.E., a rumor to the effect that he had died spread throughout the territory precipitating a rebellion by the Trachonitans. The outbreak was suppressed quickly by Herod's troops, but a number of the rebel leaders took refuge in Nabataea, from where they were permitted by Syllaeus to continue to agitate against Judaean domination. In addition to Syllaeus' personal quarrel with Herod, the Nabataeans had always resented that the northeastern territories had been given to Judaea by Augustus, thereby permitting Herod to gain control over part of the important ancient caravan route from Petra to Damascus. They were therefore only too ready to permit the Trachonitans to use Nabataean territory as a sanctuary from which they could mount raids into Judaean controlled territory. Before long, these incursions took an unacceptable toll of life and property among the Judaean residents of the border villages.

Precluded from unilateral action beyond his borders by the unwritten rules governing his status as a Roman client king, Herod brought the matter before Gaius Sentius Saturninus, the Roman legate in Syria. Herod demanded that the Nabataeans surrender the leaders of the insurgents and also that they return the 60 talents that Herod had loaned to Obodas through Syllaeus. Saturninus ruled in favor of Herod and ordered Syllaeus to repay the funds within thirty days. Moreover, in a demonstration of ostensible even-handedness calculated to lend support to Herod's position in the matter before him, the legate required that Judaea and Nabataea each return any subjects of the other who had taken refuge in their territory. Syllaeus refused to comply with Saturnius' decision and went to Rome to appeal to the emperor, whereupon Herod turned to the legate for help once again and received permission to take punitive action against the Nabataeans. Herod invaded Nabataea in the year 8, and defeated the Nabataean general Nakabos who opposed his advance. He besieged and then captured the fortress of Rhaepta and the Trachonitan rebels who had found sanctuary there. To help preclude any further challenges to his rule in Trachonitis, Herod resettled some 3,000 Idumaeans in the district.

Upon hearing about what had happened after his departure for Rome, Syllaeus managed to obtain an audience with Augustus. Appearing before him dressed as if he were in mourning, Syllaeus reported to the emperor that Nabataea had been invaded and ravaged by Herod. He alleged that some 2,500 of the leading Nabataeans had been killed and that Herod had plundered all the treasure stored in the fortress of Rhaepta. Augustus was outraged that Herod had invaded a neighboring state without his sanction. He questioned Herod's envoys in Rome about the accuracy of Syllaeus' claims, and when they tried to explain that Herod had acted with the permission of Saturninus, Augustus simply refused to listen. He considered Herod as the aggressor who had disturbed the peace in the region. Augustus then wrote Herod a harsh letter advising him that their friendship was at an end. Henceforth, Herod was to be treated as just another Roman client king, without any of the special privileges and distinctions he had previously enjoyed. Herod's humiliation by the emperor led Syllaeus to encourage further rebellion by the Trachonitans and they rose up against the Idumaeans that Herod had resettled in their lands. This time Herod did not dare take any action to suppress the revolt without first receiving explicit sanction from Augustus. He dispatched a diplomatic mission to Rome to plead his cause, but the emperor refused to see them. Herod's standing in the Roman Empire had now fallen to an unprecedented low point.

Things soon took an upward turn for Herod as a result of events in Nabataea. Obodas III of Nabataea died and a certain Aeneas, who took the name of the earlier Nabataean kings, Aretas, became ruler in his place, thereby

denying the coveted crown to Syllaeus. Aretas IV sent a delegation to Rome laden with gifts for Augustus to obtain the emperor's confirmation. Such a step, of course, was politically indispensable since the emperor had the right either to confirm the heir of a client king or to appoint one of his own choosing. Because Aretas had presented him with a *fait accompli*, Augustus was furious and refused his offerings, raising the possibility that the emperor still might decide to appoint Syllaeus as king. This dispute was seen by Herod's special envoy to Rome, Nicholas of Damascus, as an opportunity to intervene with the emperor on behalf of his master. A shrewd diplomat, he avoided another direct approach to Augustus, which probably would have been rebuffed. Instead, he offered to serve as an advocate for Aretas and was eagerly accepted in this role by the Nabataean embassy to Rome.

Appearing before Augustus on behalf of Aretas, Nicholas launched an assault on Syllaeus that was calculated to arouse the emperor against the Nabataean pretender. In addition to charging him with numerous crimes including the untimely death of Obodas, Nicholas also accused him of committing adultery in both Nabataea and Rome. Since Augustus fancied himself as a moral reformer, the latter charge struck home and the emperor's attitude toward Syllaeus underwent a perceptible change. Once Nicholas detected this change of heart, he proceeded to intercede on behalf of Herod by also charging that Syllaeus had lied to Augustus about Herod's intervention in Nabataea. He pointed out that Syllaeus' claims that Herod had killed 2,500 Nabataeans was a gross exaggeration, the real figure was closer to 25, and that the claim that the Judaean king had plundered the country was simply false. The members of Aretas' delegation supported Nicholas in these charges. Finally, Nicholas succeeded in getting Augustus to take note that Herod's actions had been sanctioned in advance by the emperor's legate in Syria, Saturninus. When Syllaeus subsequently was compelled to admit that his tale about the large number of Nabataean casualties was a gross exaggeration, Augustus' disenchantment with him became complete, making reconciliation with Herod possible.

Augustus, who was still peeved at Aretas for having the audacity to make himself king of Nabataea without the emperor's prior authorization now considered giving the country to Herod. However, it was just at this moment that Herod's paranoia intruded to prevent this from happening. He had earlier become convinced that Alexander and Aristobulus had hatched yet another plot against him as a consequence of information given to him by a visiting Greek dignitary, Gaius Julius Eurycles of Sparta. The latter had developed a close relationship with Alexander and then betrayed his indiscreet confidences to Herod in the expectation of gaining a substantial reward for his service. The king concluded from what he was told that his sons were plotting his downfall, and he

decided to take definitive action against them. To prepare the ground for this, he composed a letter to Augustus outlining their alleged crimes and asking permission of the emperor to impose the appropriate punishment. He entrusted the letter to his envoys Olympus and Volumnius, with specific instructions to delay delivery to the emperor until after Nicholas of Damascus succeeded in bringing about his reconciliation. Now that the latter had been achieved, the letter was given to the emperor. No sooner did Augustus read it than he changed his mind and decided not to give Nabataea to Herod. With such developments taking place in Herod's household, which seemed to be plagued by chronic instability, he saw no point in giving Herod additional territory to govern. Instead, Augustus now accepted the gifts sent by Aretas and confirmed him as king of Nabataea.

Augustus responded to Herod's letter accusing his sons of treason by saying that if Herod's sons had actually planned to kill him, they should be punished severely. However, he did not want Herod to act unilaterally in the matter and he instructed him to convene a council of notables at Berytus (Beirut), which was to include representatives of the Roman administration in Syria, to render judgment in the case. Herod duly convened a council of some 150 notables who, not surprisingly, found his sons guilty as charged. Alexander and Aristobulus were taken to Samaria where they were strangled in the year 7.

The death of the two potential heirs to the throne set the stage for a further conspiracy to eliminate Herod by his eldest son Antipater and his brother Pheroras. Antipater, although now the acknowledged heir-apparent, was afraid that Herod might still change his mind about choosing him to be his successor and plotted to kill his father, whom he had never forgiven for his mistreatment of his mother Doris. Pherorus, who still harbored his own ambition to succeed his brother and who hoped to eliminate both the king and Antipater before the latter had a chance to mount the throne, decided to take one step at a time and getting rid of Herod was clearly the first step. Accordingly, he joined in a conspiracy with his nephew to assassinate the king.

The sudden friendship that sprung up between Antipater and his uncle Pheroras aroused the suspicions of Salome, who reported to Herod that there was a conspiracy afoot. Once again Herod had to proceed with caution. He could not take any definitive action against either his son or brother without the emperor's permission, particularly since Pheroras had been made tetrarch of Peraea by Augustus himself. The most he could at the time was to order his brother to return to his tetrarchy and to banish him from Judaea. Antipater and his mother were forbidden to have any further contact with him. To assuage Antipater's concerns about the succession, Herod now prepared a will formally designating Antipater as his heir. However, the will also stipulated that the suc-

cession after Antipater should go to Antipas, another of Herod's sons by his marriage to Mariamme II (not to be confused with the already executed Mariamme the Hasmonean). Herod refused to contemplate the succession going to Antipater's own son, because the latter was a Hasmonean by virtue of Antipater's marriage to the daughter of Antigonus.

Despite the will, Antipater still did not trust Herod. He became particularly suspicious when the king sent two of his other sons, Archelaus and Philip, to Rome for their education. Antipater feared that the purpose of this was so that they might become close to Augustus and thereby contrive to succeed Herod in his stead. As a result, Antipater defied his father's ban and continued to meet clandestinely with Pheroras to plot against Herod. The plan they came up with was quite straightforward: Pheroras was to poison his brother. Since Salome was spying on the conspirators on behalf of Herod, Antipater came to feel that it was no longer safe for him to remain in Jerusalem. He thus arranged for friends in Rome to write to Herod urging that it would be advantageous for him to send Antipater for a visit to the imperial capital. Herod gave his permission and in the early part of the year 5 B.C.E. Antipater left for Rome, but not before he obtained the will that designated him as Herod's heir and successor. He wanted to present it to Augustus before Herod had a chance to change his mind. While in Rome, Antipater also conspired to discredit his half-brothers Archelaus and Philip by allegations that they were involved in a conspiracy against Herod, hoping thereby to eliminate them as possible competitors for the throne.

The Antipater-Pheroras conspiracy soon unraveled as Pheroras became ill and died before he could take Herod's life. With Pheroras' death, details of the conspiracy began to be revealed and the evidence clearly pointed to Antipater. Herod imposed a strict censorship on all correspondence between Judaea and Rome to avoid having anyone alert Antipater, and then wrote warmly to his son urging him to return home. He could hardly refuse his father's request and proceeded to Judaea. Upon his arrival at the palace in Jerusalem, Herod denounced him as a parricide. Herod informed him that a hearing of the accusations against him would take place the following day under the aegis of Quinctilius Varus, the legate (later proconsul) of Syria, who was visiting the city at the time. The hearing made it quite evident that Antipater was guilty as charged, but no action was taken against him. Varus returned to Antioch, and Herod sent envoys to Augustus bearing a letter informing the emperor of Antipater's perfidy.

Herod himself had now become gravely ill; and, knowing that his death was imminent, he prepared a new will designating his son Antipas as heir to the kingdom. It appears that Herod gave some credence to Antipater's charges

against Archelaus and Philip. While on his deathbed, a letter arrived from Augustus authorizing Herod to do whatever he wished with Antipater. Then, unaccountably, and at the very last moment, he revised his will once again. It seems reasonable to speculate that he suddenly realized that, despite his wishes, it was extremely unlikely that Augustus would entrust the sizeable and geopolitically important kingdom of Judaea to any one of his surviving sons, the oldest of which, Archelaus, was only 18 years old. The strategic significance to Rome of the territories controlled by Herod was clearly too great to be left in the hands of a mere boy. Accordingly, Herod shrewdly decided to divide his realm into several parts, assuming that such an arrangement would be more acceptable to Augustus, without whose approval Herod's will would have remained a meaningless scrap of paper. In his new and final testament, he nominated Archelaus to be his heir as king, but only of Judaea proper and Samaria. Antipas was appointed tetrarch of Galilee and Peraea, while Philip was designated tetrarch of Trachonitis, Batanea, and Auranitis. The cities of Jamnia, Ashdod, and Phasaelis were left to his sister Salome. In the last analysis, it remains unclear as to what Herod's true intent was by this arrangement. The answer to this mystery went to the grave with Herod who died four days after he had his eldest son Antipater executed for treason.

With Herod's burial in his fortress of Herodion in the spring of 4 B.C.E. another era in the history of Israel came to an end. He died unloved and unwanted by his people. A popular contemporary assessment of his reign is reflected in a pseudepigraphic work composed shortly after his death.

> And after them [the Hasmoneans] there ruled a ruthless king who was not from the priestly family, a terrible man who knew no shame. . . . [H]e cut off their heads with his sword and interred their corpses in remote places so that none would know where they were buried; and he killed old people and showed no mercy on young ones; they suffered bitterly in their country because of their fear of him; and he inflicted severe punishment on them such as the Egyptians had inflicted upon them; and he punished them for four and thirty years.[3]

On the positive side of his ledger, Herod succeeded in transforming Judaea into a relatively strong, albeit minor, client state of Rome, and thereby managed to maintain its internal autonomy throughout his long reign. However, it was already quite evident at the time of his demise that the political structure that he had built and sustained by the force of his considerable talents and iron will would not long survive him, as indeed it did not.

NOTES

1. Tacitus, *The Complete Works, Annals* 1.2.
2. *The Book of Enoch*, 90.29
3. *The Assumption of Moses* 6:2–7, In James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 2.

Chapter 12

The Herodians

Immediately following Herod's death his ever loyal sister Salome took steps to assure that his plans for the succession, as outlined in his will, would have the support of the Judaean army, the true foundation of Herodian authority in the country. Perhaps fearing that the senior commanders might be reluctant to place themselves at the disposal of Herod's three inexperienced teenage sons, she asked that the army as a whole convene at Jericho. There she conveyed the terms of Herod's last will and testament to the assembled troops and urged their support of the proposed division of power among his sons. The army, which generally had fared well under Herod, responded by indicating its acclaim of the new political order. They were prepared to offer Archelaus the crown then and there, but the prince prudently declined to accept pending confirmation of Herod's will by Rome.

As soon as the week of formal mourning for Herod came to an end, Archelaus went to the Temple where he received an enthusiastic reception from the people as heir presumptive to the throne of Judaea. For the most part, this was less an indication of support for Archelaus, who surely was not well known to the people, than a collective expression of relief at the passing of Herod. Thus, spokesmen for the crowds exploited the opportunity to present a number of demands before the future ruler that were intended to provide relief from the excesses of Herod's harsh regime. Among other popular demands, such as immediate tax relief and the release of political prisoners, there was also one that surely originated in Pharisee circles, possibly from the Sanhedrin. This de-

mand had serious political implications and was probably raised as an early test of whether Archelaus intended to be a popular ruler or follow in his father's footsteps.

This latter demand called for the removal of the high priest Joazar, who had been appointed by Herod. It was argued that the election of a high priest should be the prerogative of the religious leaders of the people, that is, the Sanhedrin, and not the arbitrary choice of the king. This was a demand that Archelaus could not possibly satisfy without seriously undermining his own stature and political authority. Since he was himself ineligible for the high priesthood, like his father, he considered it imperative that he be able to ensure the personal loyalty of whoever occupied that most important office.

Archelaus sought to dissuade the people from pressing their demands at such a premature point in time. He tried to assure them that he would deal fully with their grievances once Rome confirmed him as ruler of Judaea. His efforts proved unsuccessful. Popular sentiment for the immediate redress of wrongs was so strong that Archelaus' ability to reason with an aroused populace quickly dwindled to negligibility, presenting him with an intractable dilemma. He was anxious to leave for Rome to seek confirmation of his succession in accordance with Herod's will, but could ill-afford to appear before the emperor to claim the throne of a country he had left in a state of unrest.

To make matters worse, the festival of Passover was approaching and crowds were flooding into Jerusalem from all over the country for the celebration. Popular leaders set up their headquarters in the Temple precinct; and, taking advantage of the throngs in the city, they began organizing street demonstrations. The choice before Archelaus was to give in and dilute the power of the throne, or to affirm his authority and restore order in the city through a strong show of force if necessary. He concluded that it would better serve his interests to adopt the latter course, to demonstrate to the Judaeans as well as to the emperor Augustus that he was in full control of affairs in the country.

As might have been expected, Archelaus' rejection of any concessions to popular demands only served to further inflame the already volatile crowds and serious outbreaks of violence took place in Jerusalem. The brutality with which the protesting crowds were dispersed was such, some 3,000 people were killed, that it not only completely alienated the populace but even many of the other members of the Herodian family, most especially Salome. Determined to see her brother's last wish carried out, she had been publicly advocating a policy of national reconciliation designed to win over the people to support of the Herodian house. Her efforts in this regard were now completely negated by the actions of Archelaus, who appeared to the Judaeans as even more despotic than his father. Archelaus thus made an implacable and dangerous foe of Salome,

who was an old friend of the Roman empress Livia, and therefore not without influence in Rome.

Hastening to Rome to present himself before the emperor and to request that Augustus confirm his succession to the throne of Judaea, Archelaus left his half-brother Philip behind to run the provisional government of the country in his absence. At about the same time, Sabinus, a Roman official dispatched by Augustus to oversee the fiscal administration of Judaea until he decided what to do about its future government, arrived in the country. Sabinus came determined to take control of Herod's treasure but was ignored for the most part by Judaean officials because he did not have specific written authority from the emperor to do anything he wished. Unable to get the cooperation he needed, Sabinus employed the Roman legion, left in Judaea by Quinctilius Varus to help maintain order, to enforce his demands. Moreover, he recruited a paramilitary force composed of armed rabble to which he effectively gave license to seize whatever property they could get their hands on. This arbitrary and quite irresponsible behavior on his part helped precipitate a new round of disorders throughout the country that Philip was unable to contain, although he made a concerted effort to do so.

An especially grievous incident occurred at this time that had the effect of precipitating a major intervention by the governor of Syria. During the festival of Pentecost in the spring of the year 4 B.C.E., when Jerusalem was again packed with masses of pilgrims, Sabinus and the Roman garrison in the city found themselves under virtual siege. Sabinus, who had installed himself in Herod's palace, discovered that he was cut off from the main Roman force in the Antonia fortress and became unnerved, even though it was not at all evident that he was in any serious danger. In his panic he ordered the troops in the Antonia to come to his relief, requiring them to force their way through the Temple precinct to reach him. This outrageous act of sacrilege ignited an already explosive situation, causing the furious Judaeans to redirect much of their anger from the Herodians to the Romans. The earlier random disorders were now transformed into open rebellion. With the exception of Samaria, where the non-Jewish elements of Herod's army remained loyal to Rome, virtually all of the country was in the throes of revolutionary upheaval.

However, it soon became obvious that the revolts were spontaneous and followed no preconceived or coordinated plan; there was no apparent cooperation between the various groupings in different parts of the country, or even within the same region. In the countryside of Judaea proper, a populist revolt erupted under the leadership of a shepherd named Athronges and his four brothers. After the rebels succeeded in wiping out a company of Romans soldiers near Emmaus, their ranks were swelled with defectors from Herod's army

who joined the struggle against the government loyalists. In Peraea, one of Herod's slaves, Simeon, led the revolt, crossed the Jordan, and attacked the royal palace at Jericho. Another independent group of insurgents in Transjordan attacked the palace at Ammathus. The rebellion in the Galilee, which was led by a certain Judah, whose father had been executed by Herod, was particularly violent. The very spontaneity of these virtually simultaneous revolts effectively precluded planning and coordination and thus condemned them to failure. On the other hand, had there been central leadership of the several insurrections, it is quite conceivable that the course of Judaea's history over the next 70 years might have been radically different.

Since he was unable to cope with the rebellions by himself, Sabinus sent pleas for assistance to Varus, urging him to bring the Roman legions from Syria to suppress the disorders. Varus soon marched south to link forces with the garrison in Jerusalem and, joined in his punitive intervention by a force of raiders from Nabataea who relished the opportunity to sack parts of Judaea, exacted a heavy toll from the country as he proceeded. Once again it was demonstrated that bravery and fanaticism alone were insufficient to overcome the power of a well-disciplined and trained army. Whole towns, such as Sepphoris, were razed and many people were arrested and sold into slavery. Order was restored in the country with an iron fist. As a warning against any further outbreaks, some 2,000 captured rebels were crucified. After matters were in hand once again, Varus took favorable note of Philip's efforts to suppress the rebellion and, developing a fondness for the young prince, advised him not to rely on the other Herodians but to proceed to Rome to look after his interests himself. It was sound advice, and Philip followed it.

In the meantime, Archelaus arrived in Rome to seek confirmation of his succession to the throne of Judaea. To his surprise, he found considerable opposition to his appointment, especially from the other Herodians. Their change of heart regarding the succession was undoubtedly attributable in large measure to the influence of Salome, who was repelled by Archelaus' conduct in suppressing the disturbances in Jerusalem, and they transferred their support to his brother Antipas. The Herodians tried to convince Augustus to give the throne to Antipas because he had been designated by Herod as his heir in an earlier version of his will. To complicate matters further, Sabinus also opposed the candidacy of Archelaus. He was still peeved at Archelaus because he had been ignored by the Judaean officers who were ostensibly under the prince's control. Archelaus evidently was also opposed by Varus.

Although the legate had submitted a formal endorsement of Archelaus, as a practical matter he demonstrated his opposition to him by permitting an independent delegation of 50 Judaeans to proceed to Rome to raise their voices

against his candidacy. The position of the popular delegation was also fully supported by representatives of the Jewish community of Rome. The Judaeans went beyond mere opposition to Archelaus; they voiced their unwavering opposition to continued rule by any of the Herodians. Instead, they sought to convince Augustus to place the country directly under a Roman governor. In addition, a delegation from the three Greek cities of Gadara, Hippus, and Gaza came to urge the emperor to free them from continued Jewish rule and to return them to the status they had prior to 30 B.C.E., when the cities were first awarded to Herod.

There were undoubtedly complex motivations behind the position taken by the Judaean delegation and the involvement of both Varus and the Jews of Rome in their appeal. There had long been a tendency among some Pharisees to believe that the Jews in Palestine should be organized as an autonomous Jewish community under the rule of the high priest, even if it meant that foreigners would wield secular the political power in the country. It will be recalled that such an argument had been made by a Jewish delegation in its appeal to Pompeius 60 years earlier, when he was adjudicating the dispute over the throne between Hyrcanus and Aristobulus. It would also seem that at least one other force behind this current appeal was the high priest Joazar. He had the most to gain from the abolition of the monarchy in favor of the high priesthood, since it would have completely eliminated the Herodians from power and left him as the dominant public figure in Judaea. Similarly, Varus had good reason to believe that, if Augustus accepted the proposal of the Judaean delegation, the country would come under the jurisdiction of Syria, and Varus had a great deal to gain financially from the enlargement of his sphere of control.

For the Jews of Rome the proposal meant the likely enhancement of their communal security within the context of imperial politics. Only a few years earlier there had been a nasty exchange of letters between Augustus and Phrataces, king of Parthia, over a revolt in Armenia, and war between the two powers was only barely averted. The Jews of Rome may have believed that they had good reason to be concerned that, if war broke out between Rome and Parthia, a Jewish king of Judaea might be tempted to align with the Parthians. He might do this both as a means of breaking loose from the tightening grip of Rome and in deference to the interests of the much larger and wealthier Jewish community in Parthian-controlled Mesopotamia. Such a Judaean-Parthian alliance had come into existence several decades earlier, albeit for reasons other than a desire to break out of the Roman orbit, when Antigonus was seated on the throne in Jerusalem by the Parthians. Were this to happen again, the Jews of Rome would find themselves in an increasingly awkward position. If, however, Judaea were to become part of a larger Roman province, there could be no

question of its aligning with the Parthians. This would eliminate the possible charges of dual loyalty that the Jews of Rome might otherwise face. Of course, if they had had any real familiarity with the Herodian princes, they would have known that the idea of any one of them leading a revolt against Rome was completely unrealistic.

After carefully deliberating the matter, in the early summer of 4 B.C.E. Augustus decided to abide by the principal provisions of Herod's last will. To give overall power to any of the contending Herodians would likely have triggered endless intrigue by the others with resulting instability and possibly civil war. On the other hand, given the present outbreaks of violence in Judaea, a move to annex the country to Rome would surely have provoked a major rebellion that could spill over into Syria and possibly destabilize the frontier with Parthia, something that Augustus was surely anxious to avoid. He therefore concluded that the most prudent course at the moment was to go along with the territorial partition proposed by Herod.

However, Augustus declined to permit any of Herod's successors to rule as king of Judaea, presumably to give himself greater freedom of action at such time as he might choose to revise the status of the territory. Since Herod appeared to have anticipated this by indicating in his will that Antipas and Philip were to rule as tetrarchs rather than as kings, Augustus merely extended the restriction to Archelaus as well. Accordingly, Augustus denied Archelaus the status of a client king, making him subject to the same closer Roman supervision that applied to his brothers. Nonetheless, Augustus took into consideration the wish of Herod, who presumably wanted Archelaus to enjoy a higher status than did his brothers because Jerusalem and the Temple were to be under his jurisdiction. Augustus therefore designated Archelaus as ethnarch of Judaea, Idumaea, and Samaria, with the promise that he might receive the title of king at some later date. Antipas became tetrarch of Galilee and Peraea, territories that shared no common border, and Philip became tetrarch of Auranitis, Batanaea, and Trachonitis. In accordance with Herod's will, Salome received the three cities of Jamnia, Azotus, and Phasaelis, but the three Greek cities of Gaza, Gadara, and Hippus were removed from being under Jewish rule, as they had requested, and were placed under the direct jurisdiction of Syria.

Of the three heirs of Herod, Philip was awarded the largest territory but also the poorest, most unsettled, and most difficult to govern. The population consisted primarily of Syrians and seminomadic Arabs, interspersed with Judaean and Idumaean colonists whom Herod settled there for the purpose of serving as a restraining influence on the people of the region who had some rather predatory habits. Because the predominant ethnic composition of the population over which he governed was non-Jewish, Philip considered himself a gen-

tile prince. He therefore had no reluctance to stamp his coins with the head of Caesar and an impression of the heathen temple at Paneas, something that would have provoked an outcry in Judaea. To everyone's surprise, Philip proved to be an exceptionally capable administrator and was able to rule the tetrarchy in relative tranquility from his capital at Caesarea Philippi (Paneas) until his death in 34 C.E. Since Philip was childless, and thus without an heir, at his demise the territories he ruled were incorporated into the proconsulate of Syria.

Like his brother, Antipas turned out to be a politically and administratively competent ruler over the territories assigned to him. Notwithstanding the hardships inflicted on Galilee by Varus during his march to Jerusalem to suppress the insurrections that followed Herod's death, Antipas managed to win the support of most of the populace which remained generally hostile to the Romans. To show his concern for the people, he rebuilt Sepphoris and made it his capital. In his eastern province, Peraea, he had to deal with incursions from the desert by Bedouin raiders, and built the fortress of Julias on the east bank of the Jordan opposite Jericho to help control their access to the area. He also sought to ensure the security of his territory from marauders by allying himself with the Nabataeans through his marriage to one of the daughters of Aretas IV, thereby also defusing the lingering resentment of the Nabataeans against his father. However, despite his success in stabilizing the territories over which he was made tetrarch, neither he nor Philip was able to earn the same degree of confidence from Augustus that Herod had so long enjoyed. Thus, when the question of the disposition of Judaea and Samaria arose once more within a few years, Augustus decided against adding those districts to the realms of either Antipas or Philip, and instead placed them under direct Roman rule.

Antipas' personal fortunes began to rise dramatically after the death of Augustus in 14 C.E. and the succession of Tiberius to the imperial throne. Tiberius was an extremely suspicious man who never really trusted any of his officials. As a consequence, because of Antipas' willingness to serve as a confidential agent of the new emperor, by spying and reporting on the activity of the Roman authorities in the east, he achieved new and elevated stature in the imperial court. Antipas' gratitude to Tiberius was such that he built a new capital on the western shores of the Sea of Galilee and named it Tiberias in honor of his benefactor. At the same time he earned the dangerous enmity of the officials he reported on, particularly Pontius Pilate, the procurator of Judaea, and Lucius Vitellius, the proconsul of Syria. In fact, in his effort to ingratiate himself with Tiberius, Antipas occasionally exercised poor judgment, unnecessarily deepening the antagonism of the Roman officials in the region.

During the latter part of his reign, when Antipas was at the height of his fortunes, he undertook a visit to Rome that was to have disastrous consequences. While in the imperial capital he stayed with his half-brother Herod-Philip, a son of Mariamme II, who was married to Herodias, daughter of Aristobulus and Berenice and granddaughter of Herod and Mariamme the Hasmonean. Herodias was a particularly ambitious woman who resented that, in accordance with Herod's will, her husband had been denied any public office. Antipas became infatuated with her, and it was arranged between them that Herodias should abandon her husband and become the tetrarch's wife. However, since Antipas was also married, he too agreed to divorce his current wife who, it will be recalled, was the daughter of the Nabataean king Aretas IV. Word of this unsavory pact somehow reached the ear of the Nabataean princess who, outraged by the perfidy of her husband, contrived to flee from Galilee to her father's court at Petra. Aretas, who already was on poor terms with Antipas because of a territorial dispute over the trade route through Gaulanitis, now broke with him completely and prepared for war.

It was at this time that the Syrian proconsul, Vitellius, was sent by the emperor to negotiate a renewal of the peace treaty with the Parthian king Artabanus. Under that treaty Rome agreed to recognize Parthia's sovereign independence in return for Parthia's acceptance of the Roman settlement of the succession crisis in Armenia that followed the death of its king Zeno-Artaxas in 35 C.E. Antipas accompanied the proconsul to the meeting that took place the following year, presumably because of his knowledge of Aramaic, the *lingua franca* of the region, which Vitellius did not speak. However, it is as likely that he was asked to go along for his possible influence on the large Jewish community in Mesopotamia, which might be swayed to use its influence in support of an outcome of the negotiations that was favorable to Rome. The meetings were held in a pavilion especially built for the occasion on a bridge across the Euphrates, the traditional boundary between the two empires. Antipas was assigned the role of host to both delegations. When the discussions ultimately produced an agreement satisfactory to Rome, in a fit of exuberance Antipas committed the blunder of sending an account of the negotiations to the emperor before and without the knowledge of the proconsul, an embarrassing and discourteous preemption that Vitellius neither forgot nor forgave.

While Antipas was away on this diplomatic mission, the still furious Aretas took advantage of his absence and mounted an invasion of Peraea. In the ensuing conflict, the forces of Antipas were thoroughly defeated and he was forced to turn to the emperor for help. Regardless of whether or not Tiberius gave his tacit approval for Antipas' unorthodox marriage arrangements, the emperor could not accept the idea that one of his vassals might take the liberty of open-

ing hostilities against another without his explicit consent. From Rome's perspective, client rulers were useful only for as long as they dutifully served Rome's interests, and perhaps their most important function was to maintain stability along the far-flung frontiers of the empire. The destabilizing action taken by the Nabataeans was therefore unacceptable to Rome, even though Aretas may have had ample personal justification for taking vengeance against Antipas because of the latter's affront to his daughter. Tiberius rallied to Antipas' support and ordered Vitellius to take punitive measures against Aretas, who was either to be killed or brought to Rome in chains. However, in 37 C.E., just at the time when Vitellius was on the march with his legions against Nabataea, the news arrived that Tiberius had died. The proconsul exploited the opportunity presented to take his revenge on Antipas for the embarrassment caused by his earlier premature disclosure of the Parthian treaty. Moreover, instead of proceeding with the campaign against Nabataea, which Tiberius hoped would restore the balance of power between Antipas and Aretas, Vitellius adopted the formalistic position that he was without instructions from the new emperor Gaius Caligula and therefore promptly terminated the Nabataean campaign and returned to Antioch. This left Antipas exposed in Peraea to further attacks by the Nabataeans.

The death of Tiberius was a severe blow to Antipas from which he never recovered. He was unable to establish the same sort of rapport with the new emperor that he had enjoyed with Tiberias. To make matters worse for Antipas, Caligula turned out to be a close friend of Agrippa, Herodias' brother. After he became emperor, Caligula decided to reward his friend with the tetrarchy of Auranitis, Batanaea, and Trachonitis, which had been ruled by Philip until his death three years earlier and which was now part of the province of Syria. He also elevated Agrippa to the dignity of king of those lands. Ironically, this was more than the ambitious Herodias could take. Obviously envious of her brother's meteoric success and obsessed with the thought of becoming a queen, Herodias persuaded Antipas, against his better judgment, to go to Rome to ask Caligula to upgrade him to a kingship as well. At this point, Agrippa, who had earlier been subjected to indignities by Antipas and bore a deep grudge against his brother-in-law, decided to intervene and exact revenge for past ills.

While Antipas and Herodias were on their way to Rome in 39, Agrippa sent a message to Caligula implicating Antipas in an earlier plot against Tiberius, something that was highly unlikely since Antipas' well-being was intimately linked to the welfare of Tiberius. Moreover, he charged him with disloyalty to the present emperor, claiming that Antipas was planning to make a bid for independence from Rome. Agrippa asserted that Antipas had accumulated an arsenal for the purpose that was sufficient to equip a force of 70,000 heavy

infantry. When the tetrarch came before the emperor he was questioned about the truth of these allegations. Although Antipas professed his unwavering loyalty to Rome, he could not deny the known fact that he had amassed a large quantity of arms in his several fortresses, most probably during the years 35–36 when the possibility of war between Rome and Parthia seemed imminent. Although the possession of such an arsenal in itself proved nothing, considering Agrippa's charges, it was sufficient to arouse Caligula's suspicions, and the emperor would take no chances with the possibility of a rebellion on the sensitive and vulnerable eastern imperial frontier. Caligula deposed Antipas from the tetrarchy on the spot, confiscated his private property in addition to his dominions, and awarded them to Agrippa. Antipas was banished to Aquitaine near the Spanish frontier for the remainder of his life. Caligula offered to permit Herodias to retain her estates and live where she chose because she was Agrippa's sister. However, acknowledging that she was the author of her husband's downfall, she decided to accompany him into exile.

By contrast with the tetrarchies of Philip and Antipas, each of which endured for some 40 years, that of Archelaus was to be of very short duration. It will be recalled that, after some hesitation, Augustus finally decided to go along with the principal provisions of Herod's will; and, perhaps against his own better judgment, he appointed Archelaus as ethnarch of Judaea and Samaria. The emperor admonished him to exercise his authority with greater prudence than he had demonstrated earlier. At least initially, the advice of the emperor appeared to have a moderating effect on Archelaus' disposition toward rash behavior. He thus avoided giving significant offense to the religious sensibilities of the people. For example, the coinage he issued was free of pagan images and symbols, and he refrained from building any temples in his territory dedicated to the cults of Rome. On the other hand, he continued his father's policy of using appointment to the high priesthood as a political instrument and replaced the high priests frequently, undermining the intrinsic political importance of the office. Thus, one of his first acts as ethnarch was to remove Joazar from the position, presumably because of the latter's support of the Judaean delegation to Rome that opposed his succession to the throne. It was not long, however, before Archelaus lapsed into a pattern of despotic behavior that was more in keeping with his instincts. One unintended consequence of this was that the Jews and Samaritans, who had been bitter enemies for centuries, joined forces in a temporary political alliance for the purpose of bringing about the removal of the ethnarch from office. Members of the extended Herodian family, including the deposed high priest Joazar, also joined in this endeavor.

Through his arrogance, Archelaus ultimately became the instrument of his own downfall: he undertook to violate an explicit prohibition of biblical law,

providing his enemies with the opportunity to accuse him of public immorality. This became a serious charge during the latter part of Augustus' reign. As Augustus aged, he became increasingly sensitive to the extent of the decline of morality in the empire, and he made it a personal goal to bring about a significant improvement in the standards of acceptable conduct. During a visit to the court of Archelaus of Cappadocia, after whom he was named, Archelaus became infatuated with the king's daughter Glaphyra, who was the widow of his brother Alexander. He divorced his wife and proceeded to marry Glaphyra. But, in accordance with Mosaic Law, one was only permitted, indeed obligated, to marry his brother's widow if he died without an heir to carry on his name. Since Glaphyra had borne three children to the deceased Alexander, Archelaus was explicitly forbidden to marry her. The fact that he went ahead with the marriage, effectively placing himself above biblical law, generated such an outcry that its reverberations were soon felt in Rome. A deputation to the emperor, probably sent by the Pharisee leaders, accused Archelaus of tyranny, immorality, and the disregard of imperial edicts. Angered by these allegations, in 6 C.E. Augustus ordered Archelaus to Rome to answer the charges levied against him. Archelaus' defense of his conduct did not satisfy Augustus, who deposed him on the spot and banished him to Gaul where he spent the rest of his days.

As indicated earlier, Augustus declined to award the territories of Judaea and Samaria to either of the remaining Herodian tetrarchs. He had little regard for either and felt under no obligation to perpetuate Herodian rule in Jerusalem. Indeed, Herodian rule had become so unpopular in Judaea that the prospective appointment of yet another of the line to the ethnarchy was certain to exacerbate tensions in the country and perhaps cause further disturbances there. Augustus therefore decided to abolish the ethnarchy and placed Judaea and Samaria under direct Roman rule.

After a period of some 150 years, Judaea now lost all semblance of national independence. Even though Herod had clearly been a client of Rome, the Judaeans could plausibly have deluded themselves that they were still an independent people, since they had internal autonomy. Now, with the removal of Archelaus and the advent of a Roman governor, the Judaeans were forced to recognize that their freedom as a people had come to an end, an acknowledgment that was soon to engender strong nationalist sentiments.

It is perhaps one of the great ironies of history that the loss of even nominal Judaean independence was brought about by the Jews themselves. It had long been the ardent desire of some popular leaders to be rid of the Antipatrids and Herodians, and the deputation that went to Rome to ask the emperor to de-

pose Archelaus actively sought to have Judaea placed under the direct jurisdiction of Rome. Now their wish had been fulfilled.

It should be noted, however, that it was most likely only a matter of time before the independence of the Herodian tetrarchies would have been brought to an end in any case. It was thus a coincidence that the expressed wishes of the Judaeans who came to see the emperor, to argue in favor of direct Roman rule, corresponded closely to the emerging Roman policy with regard to its client states. The economic and political benefits to Rome of maintaining such vassal states had reached a point where they were outweighed by the inconveniences and liabilities they represented for coherent imperial policy.

Chapter 13

Judaea Becomes a Roman Province

It would seem that the Judaean advocates of direct Roman rule made one fundamental misjudgment in arguing for such a change in the political status of Judaea. There is good reason to believe that they were confident that should Judaea be incorporated into the Roman province of Syria, the Jews would be allowed, except with regard to taxation, to manage their own internal affairs; that is, as a practical matter, they would have communal autonomy. However, this approach to the matter of jurisdiction was not consonant with Augustus' policy for a number of reasons. The strategic importance of Judaea as the land link between Egypt and Syria was too great not to have the country under strict imperial supervision. Furthermore, the territory was too large and its people had proved to be too volatile simply to place them under a provincial government that already had major responsibilities for control of the always dangerous Parthian frontier. Finally, Augustus was reluctant to place too much power in the hands of his distant military governors, who might be tempted to use it to oppose the emperor, and Syria was already the seat of the most important proconsulate in the whole of the empire.

At the time, the Roman empire encompassed some two dozen provinces, 11 of which, the richest and most stable, came under the purview of the Senate and were governed by former consuls or praetors, known as proconsuls. Officers chosen by Augustus governed the remaining provinces. Except for Egypt, which had a special regime, legates governed the larger provinces and procurators the smaller. Augustus surely had no wish to further enhance the stature of

the powerful governor of Syria, Quinctilius Varus, by the addition of Judaea and Samaria to his jurisdiction. Accordingly, the emperor decided to reconstitute Judaea as an independent province of tertiary rank, similar in status to Corsica, Sardinia, Mauretania, and Epirus. It was to be governed by a procurator directly responsible to the emperor.

The task of structuring Judaea and Samaria into an imperial province was assigned to the imperial legate in Syria, Publius Sulpicius Quirinius. His very first official act upon arrival in Jerusalem created a misunderstanding, unintentionally to be sure, that placed the Judaeans on a collision course with Rome that ultimately was to lead to disaster for them.

The most immediate task before Quirinius was to determine the wealth of the new province and to assess its capacity for taxation. The procedure normally followed in arriving at such a judgment was to divide the country into a number of districts. Each of the districts would provide a census of the population and property contained within its limits, and a tax was then levied on the basis of the information thus provided. The principle underlying Roman tax policy was that when a nation had been conquered and rendered incapable of further resistance, both people and possessions became the absolute property of Rome. However, once the empire had grown large, it became unfeasible to apply this principle in actual practice. Accordingly, conquered nations were permitted to retain limited autonomy subject to the payment of a capitation tax. In addition, they were required to pay a tax on the produce of their land. They were also obligated to pay certain other taxes, such as those for the repair and maintenance of local roads. However, the bulk of the revenue supplied to Rome was derived from the capitation and land taxes, which were widely resented. The subject peoples saw the capitation or poll tax as particularly degrading because it tangibly demonstrated that those who paid it were no longer free people, although it was the land tax that imposed the greatest economic burden. The land tax varied in amount from a tenth to a fourth of the harvest, unless it was set at a fixed annual sum, which had to be paid regardless of the nature of the harvest in any particular year.

For as long as Judaea had the status of a client state, it was not subject to taxation by Rome. It seems reasonable to assume that those Judaeans who appealed to Augustus to depose Archelaus and place the country under direct Roman jurisdiction were aware of the fiscal implications of their request. Judaea would thenceforth be treated in a manner consistent with the rest of the provinces of the empire. In any case, it was soon evident that if they understood this, they failed to convey it to the populace as a whole. Thus, when word was spread throughout Judaea that every householder would have to give a complete accounting of his property to Roman officials, the reaction was troubled to say

the least. It should have been understood by the Judaeans that Augustus was by no means punishing them for having requested Roman rule but was simply acting in a way consistent with general Roman policy, and to do this a census of people and property was absolutely essential. However, in carrying out his charge, Quirinius appears to have been unaware of, or to have overlooked, the fact that the taking a census of the Jews in the usual Roman manner of a headcount involved an explicit violation of biblical law. That law, for reasons that need not detain us here, mandated the use of a more indirect method.[1]

This seemingly deliberate and unnecessary assault on Jewish religious sensibilities created a groundswell of resentment, and it was only by the intercession of the high priest Joazar, who was returned to the office after the deposition of Archelaus, that the people were convinced to comply with the Quirinius' demands. Nonetheless, the discontent generated by the affair was widespread and soon gave birth to a new nationalist movement, the Zealots, who recruited their adherents for the most part from among the Pharisees. Their credo and rallying cry was implacable opposition to Roman domination. In their view, the payment of taxes to a foreign king was an affront to the God of Israel, and they were determined to resist Roman rule by force of arms. Both the Zealots and the Pharisee mainstream believed that domination by the Romans was but a transitory stage on Israel's historical road that would ultimately come to an end in a reassertion of Judaean independence. The Pharisees reconciled themselves to the current situation with the consolatory conviction that God would soon deliver the people of Israel from their subjugation to a foreign power. The Zealots, however, rejected the passivity implicit in this attitude and proclaimed the alternate principle that God would intervene in their behalf only when they themselves tangibly demonstrated their determination to be free.

The Zealots were led by a certain Judah of Galilee, who apparently used the inflammatory issue of the census to trigger a revolt against the Romans in 6 C.E. Quirinius had little difficulty in putting down the insurrection, during which Judah was killed and his followers dispersed. However, the Romans were unable to stamp out the nationalist teachings of the Zealots, which would inspire a far greater and more serious challenge to Rome a half-century later.

After the suppression of the revolt, Quirinius completed the task of organizing Judaea as an imperial province and then returned to Syria. To serve as the procurator of Judaea, Augustus appointed Coponius (6–9 C.E.), who established the Roman administrative capital and military headquarters at Caesarea, which was more convenient for communications with Rome than inland Jerusalem, and which, because of its large gentile population, was more congenial to the Romans. Although the procurator did not have the same rank or status as the senatorial proconsuls and imperial legates, he performed essen-

tially identical functions and had complete military and judicial powers in his jurisdiction. Since the actual military forces at Coponius' immediate disposal were limited to some 3,000 men, most of which were garrisoned at Caesarea, with contingents stationed in both Jerusalem and Sebaste, he was forced to rely on additional support, when needed, from Syria. This had the tendency to compromise the independence of the procurator, who at times was seen as really subordinate to the governor of the much larger province to the north.

For administrative purposes, Judaea was subdivided into about a dozen districts or toparchies. The procurator not only was responsible for maintaining order in the province, but was also charged with the collection of taxes, which he did not have the authority to increase. Because the procurator's annual salary was paid directly out of the imperial treasury, the restriction on his ability to increase taxes was intended to serve as a protection for the people of the provinces against the sort of extortion that was typical under the Roman Republic. In the latter, governors derived their income from the lands they administered. The people were also endowed with the right of direct appeal to Rome in the event that the procurator exceeded or abused his authority. However, all this was truer in theory than in practice. The tradition of extortion by Roman officials was deeply ingrained and it was the rare procurator who did not indulge in tyranny and corruption.

The day to day administration of the province was entrusted to a large extent to indigenous institutions, as it was a firm principle of the imperial government to leave the enforcement of local laws and the management of native institutions to local authorities, at least to the greatest extent possible. As a result, the indigenous Judaean authorities enjoyed more local autonomy under the Romans than they had under the Herodians. Local councils varying in size from seven to twenty-three members, depending on the size and population of the locality, were granted broad jurisdiction in both administrative and criminal affairs. The Sanhedrin of Jerusalem, in addition to its intrinsic religious authority over the Jews of the country, also served as the superior council for the province as a whole with authority to render legal decisions and frame regulations in those matters that exceeded the competence of the local councils. Although the Judaean bodies had jurisdiction over civil and criminal matters, decisions in capital cases had to be confirmed by the procurator before capital punishment could be inflicted. The procurator, however, was not bound by any of the indigenous council decisions and could and did nullify them whenever he deemed it appropriate or expedient. As the representative of the emperor, he also arrogated the authority to nominate or dismiss the high priest, the unintended consequence of the policy originally instituted by Herod for domestic political purposes. Finally, the procurator alone had full and final ju-

risdiction over Roman citizens within the province, regardless of whether they were also Judaeans.

Although there remained a deeply imbedded resentment of Roman rule among a large segment of the population, given the promptness and force with which the revolt of Judah of Galilee was suppressed, this resentment was not given public expression in overt anti-Roman activity. Accordingly, throughout the remainder of Augustus' reign, Judaea remained relatively peaceful. The only significant threat to the public tranquility came as a result of the reemergence of the longstanding hostility between the Jews and Samaritans. An inflammatory incident took place in which a number of Samaritans managed to make their way to the Temple late at night and desecrated it by scattering the remains of dead human bodies, presumably removed from a cemetery outside the city walls. Aware of the possible consequences of any repetition of such vandalism, Coponius defused the situation by making sure that the Temple was guarded more closely against unauthorized intrusions.

Conditions continued to remain stable in Judaea under Coponius' successors as procurator, Marcus Ambibulus (9–11 C.E.) and Annius Rufus (12–14 C.E.), during whose tenure the emperor Augustus died on August 19, 14. Around the year 10, Salome, the last of the Antipatrids, died and willed all of her estates (Jamnia, Azotus, and Phasaelis) to her old friend the empress Livia, thereby transforming them into a Roman imperial possession under a separate government. As will be seen, the Roman possession of Jamnia was to play a significant political role in the troubles that arose during the latter part of the reign of Caligula.

There was no immediate change in Roman policy with regard to Judaea after the accession of Tiberius to the imperial throne, other than the new emperor's decision to appoint his procurators for longer periods of time, instead of the three-year assignments made by Augustus. Since the procurators were generally not of the independently wealthy aristocratic class, Augustus recognized their tendency to enrich themselves by fleecing the provinces over which they were given control. He therefore sought to limit their ability to impoverish the Roman provinces under procuratorial administration through frequent rotation of their appointments. Tiberius, on the other hand, appeared to be more concerned about having too many ambitious men in Rome and therefore preferred to keep them away in the provinces for much longer periods. He too was aware of their rapacity, but concluded that if their periods of tenure were short, they would only attempt to compensate themselves by seeking to derive as much gain as possible from their brief tours of duty. Josephus reports that Tiberius once illustrated this with a story of how one once came upon a wounded man lying helpless on the ground with a great number of flies attack-

ing his wound. When the bystander attempted to chase the flies away, the wounded man pleaded with him to stop, saying: "If thou drivest these flies away, thou wilt hurt me worse; for as these are already full of my blood, they do not crowd about me, nor pain me so much as before, but are sometimes more remiss, while the fresh ones that come, almost famished, and find me quite tired down already, will be my destruction."[2] Accordingly, Tiberius considered it to be to the advantage of the provinces if he appointed his governors for a more protracted period of tenure.

Tiberius' initial choice for procurator of Judaea, Valerius Gratus (15–26), appears to have been a highly competent and humane administrator, although he had considerable difficulty in finding a high priest with whom he could work effectively. With the elimination of the ethnarch and the establishment of the Roman headquarters at Caesarea, the high priest, headquartered at the Temple in Jerusalem, once again became the effective head of the entire Jewish community. This made the office one of considerable importance for the successful administration of the province by the procurator. Accordingly, Gratus replaced the high priest four times in as many years until he found one with whom he was satisfied. In 17, he finally appointed Joseph Caiaphas who held the position until the year 36.

However, the problem of manipulation of the high priesthood was no longer a volatile issue in Judaea since the majority of the people had other more immediate and personal concerns, namely the tax burden which had become onerous under the procurators, notwithstanding their lack of authority to increase tax levels. In concert with the Syrians, who suffered similar exactions, the Judaeans issued an appeal to Tiberius to lower the tribute. In response, and in order to review affairs in the east generally, Tiberius sent his nephew Germanicus to Syria to look into the complaints registered by local leaders against Roman administration of the provinces. It is not known whether Germanicus accorded any merit to the Judaean plea for a reduction in taxes. In any case, he died under suspicious circumstances in the year 19 before he completed his mission.

NOTES

1. The acceptable method of taking a census is described in the Bible in Ex. 30:11–16.

2. Flavius Josephus, *Complete Works, Antiquities*, 18.6.5.

Chapter 14

Pontius Pilate: Procurator of Judaea

It was at about this time that a definite shift in the official attitude of Rome toward Judaism generally began to take place, a change that soon was to have inevitable repercussions in Judaea. The ostensible cause of the policy change was a series of scandals involving eastern religions, which took place in the imperial capital about the year 19 C.E. It seems that for a substantial bribe, the priests of the cult of Isis convinced a gullible young matron, Paulina, that the god Anubis had fallen in love with her and insisted that she attend a supper in the temple of Isis in Rome. When Paulina arrived, she found a long-rejected adulterous suitor waiting for her there. Tiberius reacted strongly to this outrage and ordered the priests and the woman who acted as a go-between to be crucified, the temple of Isis destroyed, and the statues of Isis thrown into the Tiber. Soon afterward, a Roman matron of high position named Fulvia, who had adopted Judaism, was defrauded by four coreligionists who had persuaded her to donate a magnificent tapestry and a quantity of gold to the Temple in Jerusalem and then absconded with both. The woman's husband duly reported the matter to Tiberius. The emperor was infuriated by this second major case of criminal fraud perpetrated in the name of oriental religions and overreacted by taking punitive action against the entire Jewish community of Rome.

In accordance with a decree of the Senate, 4,000 Jews were conscripted into the Roman legions and were sent on a campaign to suppress brigands in Sardinia. Although this clearly anti-Jewish move had no immediate impact on the Jews of Judaea, it served as an indication of the general drift of imperial policy

under Tiberius toward elimination of the special status heretofore accorded to those who professed the faith of Judaism. The immunities traditionally granted to the Jews as a matter of right since the days of Julius Caesar included the ability to plead their cases before their own communal courts and exemption from military service. The latter exemption was granted on the grounds that such service necessarily involved work on the Sabbath and the partaking of forbidden foods. These long established rights were now transformed into privileges that were granted as a matter of imperial favor and were subject to revocation at the emperor's pleasure.

The implications of this change in imperial policy became evident soon after the replacement of Valerius Gratus as procurator of Judaea with Pontius Pilate (27–37). Reflecting the winds of change in Rome, Pilate assumed his post with a sense of great disdain for the Jews he was to rule on behalf of the emperor. Since Tiberius appeared to have taken a position adverse to the continued treatment of the Jews as a special case within the empire, Pilate soon undertook steps to reflect this perspective within Judaea. Accordingly, one of his first official acts was to attempt to get the Jews to accept the presence of pagan symbols in Jerusalem. This was a radical departure from past practice. The former procurators respected the aversion of the Judaeans to graven images and, as a matter of custom, had such ornaments removed from the imperial standards whenever Roman troops had the occasion to enter the city. Pilate, however, decided that it was time to put an end to such acts of deference to Judaean sensibilities, presumably hoping thereby to increase his stock with the emperor. Thus, when a rotation of the troops garrisoned in the Antonia fortress was to take place, Pilate instructed the fresh troops to enter the city at night without removing the silver busts of the emperor that topped their standards. When it was discovered later that the sanctity of the city had been desecrated, the populace became outraged. An outbreak of violence was prevented only by the admonitions of cooler heads among the popular leaders who argued that they should first send a delegation to the procurator asking him to follow longstanding custom and have the offending images removed.

An imposing delegation of Judaean notables proceeded to Caesarea to plead with Pilate, and soon discovered that the man to whom they were appealing was completely indifferent to their concerns. Indeed, he considered their petition to be part of a contest of wills that he had no doubt he would win. Pilate let them know that their request to remove the emperor's image was an affront to Tiberius and that he would not even consider it. The delegation, however, refused to accept his response as final and persisted in besieging him with their request for several days. Frustrated by their intransigence on the issue, Pilate decided to attempt to intimidate them. He invited the Jewish delegation to

meet with him in the circus and then had them surrounded by his soldiers, threatening to have them all killed if they persisted with their demands. To his shock, they failed to be intimidated by his threats and clearly indicated their readiness to die rather than tolerate the profanation of their laws. Not being sure of how an arbitrary slaughter of the notables of Jerusalem might be viewed in Rome, Pilate concluded that the most prudent course was for him to back down from the confrontation and agree to the removal of the standards. Needless to say, Pilate was quite bitter over his humiliation in this affair, and was not prepared to accept his defeat gracefully. It would only be a matter of time, and not very long at that, before he would test the will of the Judaeans once again.

It would probably be unfair to attribute Pilate's actions entirely to his own predilections. There was at the time a general trend throughout the empire to promote emperor-worship as a means of unifying the vast agglomeration of diverse nations contained within it. By lifting the emperor out of the ranks of ordinary mortals and making him an object of adoration, it was believed that it would be possible to create a bond of union among these vastly different peoples that would otherwise be unattainable. This policy had met with considerable success in other provinces of the far-flung empire, but had not even been attempted in Judaea. Pilate therefore became determined to introduce the practice there as well. Nonetheless, his second attempt to do so was not nearly as blatant as the first.

The old palace of Herod in Jerusalem traditionally served as the procurator's residence whenever he visited the city, and Pilate took the step of having votive shields dedicated to the emperor installed in the palace. The shields only contained the names of the emperor and the one who dedicated them. Nonetheless, the leaders of the Pharisees saw through Pilate's apparently rather innocuous act. They viewed it as a plot by the procurator to familiarize the people of Judaea with the idea of emperor-worship and reacted vehemently. When they advised the masses of the people about the implications of Pilate's action there was a general outcry that promised trouble. Even the sons of Herod, whose devotion to Rome was beyond question, implored Pilate to reverse his decision. According to Philo, they clamored, "Do not arouse sedition, do not make war, do not destroy the peace; you do not honour the emperor by dishonouring ancient laws. Do not take Tiberius as your pretext for outraging the nation; he does not wish any of our customs to be overthrown. If you say that he does, produce yourself an order or a letter or something of the kind so that we may cease to pester you and having chosen our envoys may petition our lord."[1] All this was to no avail. It was a contest of wills, and Pilate would not concede a second time.

A direct appeal was ultimately made to Tiberius. Although there is little reason to believe that the emperor was as upset about the matter as he pretended to be, he did reverse Pilate's decision, probably because of his special relationship with Antipas, who urged him strongly to do so. Tiberius apparently concluded that it was not an expedient course of action under the existing circumstances and ordered Pilate to remove the offending shields from Jerusalem and place them instead in the temple of Augustus in Caesarea. Pilate thus lost the second round of his contest with the Judaeans on the issue of emperor-worship as well, but remained determined to succeed in undermining Judaea's resistance to subordinating its religion to Rome's will.

It was during this period that an event took place that was of little political consequence at the time, but which had enormous impact on the future course of history. In about the year 29, Jesus of Nazareth began his ministry with a following in Galilee. In a period pregnant with messianic expectations, his followers believed him to be the Messiah, the Son of God and king of Israel. He was urged by some to proclaim his kingship, but he demurred. During the next several years, Jesus visited Jerusalem a number of times, particularly on the festivals of Passover and Tabernacles. His preaching regarding the imminent arrival of God's kingdom and his frequent association with the more downtrodden and less desirable elements of the population brought him into conflict with the Judaean establishment, including the high priest.

In the spring of 34, upon Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem at the approach of Passover, his followers acclaimed him as the Messiah and king of Israel. With the Judaean leaders effectively held hostage by Pilate for the submissiveness of the population, the political implications of Jesus' acclamation became a matter of considerable concern. He was brought before a council convened by the high priest and was interrogated about his teachings, most especially as to whether he considered himself to be the Messiah and therefore king of the Judaeans. This was the council's primary concern, since Jerusalem was bulging with pilgrims from all over the country who had come for the festival. The Judaean authorities were fearful that if Jesus claimed to be the Messiah, it might well precipitate a rebellion against Roman overlordship, with potentially horrendous consequences. His responses to the council's inquiries were not found to be adequately reassuring with regard to his intentions; and the council decided to err, if necessary, on the side of maintaining public order. It turned him over to the procurator as a political troublemaker, and as such, Pilate ordered that he be crucified along with other offenders. "The historical Jesus died in the Spring of the year 34. He was born a humble Judaean and was crucified as a political offender against Rome for claiming, messianically, to be king of the Judaeans.

The ideological Jesus, who revolutionized a large part of the world's thinking and changed the course of civilization, began with the crucifixion."[2]

As it turned out, Pilate's eventual downfall came about as a result of the repressive measures that he adopted not against the Jews but against the Samaritans. According to the traditions of the latter, the sacred vessels employed in the Tabernacle during Israel's early history were not the ones being used in the Temple in Jerusalem. The Samaritans believed that Moses had buried those vessels on Mount Gerizim, the central site of their religious worship. The entire community of Samaria was thrown into a state of virtual frenzy by the appearance of a religious charlatan who claimed that he knew where the vessels were buried. The uncovering of these vessels was viewed as a prelude to the advent of the Messiah. Because messianism was rampant in the Palestine of the time, there was an enormous movement of people toward Gerizim in the expectation that an event of cosmic proportions was about to take place on the holy mountain. Given the general discontent with Roman rule, the pilgrimage also appeared to take on a definite political character as many Samaritans bore arms. Pilate became concerned that the religious event might also serve as the trigger for a revolt and dispatched troops from the garrison at Sebaste to Gerizim to disperse the extremely excited crowds. Inevitably, a clash took place between the Romans and the Samaritans during which many of the latter were killed. In addition, a number of Samaritan notables were taken prisoner and subsequently executed by Pilate's order.

At the time that these events took place in Samaria, the proconsul of Syria was Aulus Vitellius (35–39), to whom the emperor had granted extraordinary powers in the east. In effect, Pilate had become his subordinate. The members of the provincial council of Samaria, taking advantage of the change in the procurator's status, sent a delegation to Vitellius charging Pilate with the capricious murder of loyal and peaceable subjects of Rome. Since the Samaritans had the reputation of being faithful vassals, Vitellius gave their charges serious credence. He suspended Pilate as procurator and appointed Marcellus, a trusted intimate, as temporary governor to restore peace in the province. He then sent Pilate to Rome to answer to the emperor for his conduct. However, by the time Pilate arrived in the capital, Tiberius had already died (March 16, 37). There is no reliable record of what happened to Pilate afterward: some sources suggest that he was banished from Rome for life, others claim that he committed suicide.

Vitellius' primary mission in the east was to maintain the military balance with the Parthians or, in the event of war, to overcome them. Recognizing the risks of leaving his rear exposed in the event of such a conflict, Vitellius actively sought to stabilize Judaea and was willing to make concessions to the people in

order to defuse the explosive situation there. At the time, the most pressing and persistent complaint of the Judaeans was the burden of excessive tribute payments. Accordingly, Vitellius placated the Judaeans by excusing them from taxes on the sale of agricultural products. In another gesture of great symbolic importance, he allowed the vestments of the high priest to be transferred to the custody of the Temple authorities, although this did not mean that he thereby relinquished Roman control over appointment to that office. Indeed, one of his first acts in the regard was to depose the high priest Caiaphas and replace him with Jonathan, son of the former high priest Ananus, whom he soon replaced as well with the latter's brother Theophilus.

NOTES

1. *Philo*, vol. 10, *Embassy to Gaius*, p. 301.
2. Solomon Zeitlin, *The Rise and Fall of the Judaean State*, vol. 2, p. 175.

Chapter 15

The Era of Agrippa I

It was not long after Gaius Caligula, the successor of Tiberius, consolidated his power in Rome in late 39 C.E. that his true character emerged. Of particular importance for Judaea, the issue of emperor-worship arose again, in a much more serious manner than it had been pursued during the procuratorship of Pilate. It had been a matter of state policy to adopt and promote the cult of emperor-worship, but the emperors themselves were deified only after their deaths. Caligula, however, in a fit of megalomania reached the conclusion that he was a living god, the brother of Jupiter, and demanded that he be venerated as such. According to Philo, Caligula justified his claim to a divine cult in the following terms: "Those who have charge of the herds of other animals, ox herds, goat herds, shepherds, are not themselves oxen, nor goats nor lambs, but men to whom is given a higher destiny and constitution, and in the same way I who am in charge of the best of herds, mankind, must be considered to be different from them and not of human nature but to have a greater and diviner destiny."[1]

No sooner had Caligula proclaimed his divinity than sycophants throughout the empire began erecting altars, statues, and temples dedicated to him. In addition, many high Roman officials who had previously worked for Tiberius and now feared for their lives and positions also quickly jumped on the bandwagon. One of the most prominent of these, perhaps the first according to Suetonius, to worship Caligula as a god was Vitellius, proconsul of Syria. Indeed, Vitellius went so far in his public adulation of the emperor as to insist

that the peace treaty he had negotiated with the Parthians during the last year of Tiberius' life had actually been consummated during the reign of Caligula.

It seemed clear that Caligula took his claims of divinity seriously; he built a temple in Rome devoted to his own godhood, where daily sacrifices were offered to him. The implications of this for the Jews throughout the empire were awesome. In Egypt, where there were about a million Jews, most of them in Alexandria, there was already considerable antagonism to the large Jewish community. Once Caligula declared his divinity, the Greeks had little problem in accepting him as such, and built statues of the emperor that they worshipped publicly. The Jews, of course, would have no part of such paganism, giving the gentile Alexandrians the occasion to unleash their fury on them. Under the leadership of Aulus Avillius Flaccus, the prefect of Egypt and an appointee of Tiberius who was anxious to gain Caligula's favor, a terrible pogrom took place in the city.

In Judaea, at the imperial estate at Jamnia, the royal steward Herennius Capito instigated the gentile inhabitants of the town to erect an altar to the new god. As might have been expected, it was promptly toppled by the Jews of the area as an idolatrous abomination that cut to the heart of Judaism. Capito reported the incident to Caligula who, after consulting with his advisers, decided to punish the Jews for this slight to his dignity. He ordered that a more than life-size statue of him should be erected not merely in Judaea, but in the very Temple itself. Anticipating that this order might provoke a violent reaction that the procurator of Judaea would be unable to suppress with the forces at his command, Caligula charged the new governor of Syria, Publius Petronius, with the responsibility for assuring that his instructions were carried out.

Petronius, who was apparently a man with both character and intelligence, found himself in a terrible dilemma. On the one hand, he knew from his previous dealings with Jews, during his earlier tenure as governor of Asia Minor from 29–35, that they would never stand still for such a sacrilege, and would fight to prevent it from being carried out. Furthermore, he was responsible for the security of the Parthian frontier, which was particularly volatile at the time because of instability in Armenia resulting from Caligula's removal of its king, Mithridates. Accordingly, Petronius was concerned that a Jewish revolt in Judaea, triggered for religious reasons, could generate similar outbreaks in other countries of the region. This could result in weakening the frontier zone and encourage a Parthian invasion, especially since there was a large Jewish population in Parthian Mesopotamia that would be outraged by the sacrilege Petronius was ordered to perpetrate in the Temple. On the other hand, he knew that to ignore the emperor's command could cost him his life. He de-

cided to procrastinate. But, to make it appear that he was moving vigorously to carry out the emperor's wish, he immediately moved south with two legions and their auxiliaries as far as Ptolemais, on the Judaean frontier. However, with the winter fast approaching, Petronius was able to plausibly suspend further operations until the following spring.

A delegation of Judaeans soon arrived at Ptolemais to urge Petronius not to attempt to carry out Caligula's command, warning him that they would rather be killed than allow an idol to be placed in the Temple. According to Josephus, they told Petronius, "[I]f thou art entirely resolved to bring this statue, and erect it, do thou first kill us, and then do what thou hast resolved on, for while we are alive we cannot permit such things as are forbidden us to be done by the authority of our legislator, and by our forefathers' determination that such prohibitions are instances of virtue."[2] They further assured him that their purpose was not to precipitate a collision with Rome, with which they much preferred to remain at peace; they were simply prepared to voluntarily lay down their lives in an effort to prevent the sacrilege from taking place.

Agrippa, whom Caligula had appointed king of Anranitis, Batanaea, and Trachonitis, was on his way to Rome at the time; and his brother Aristobulus, who was acting as his regent, also went to see Petronius to plead with him not to carry out his orders. In the meanwhile, Petronius had already commissioned the statue to be made at Sidon, thereby assuring Caligula that he was proceeding to carry out the emperor's wishes. However, he could see no reasonable way both to satisfy Caligula and to placate the Jews. To make matters worse, the Judaeans had proclaimed an agricultural strike, and if plowing did not begin soon, the year's crops would be ruined and Judaea would be rendered incapable of providing the expected revenues to the imperial treasury. Petronius finally decided that he could temporize no longer, and advised the Judaeans at a conference he called in Tiberias that, even though it might cost him his life, he was going to write to the emperor and urge him to countermand his instructions.

In the meanwhile, Agrippa, who probably learned of Caligula's order from Petronius, saw this edict as a threat to his own future status within the empire as well as an impending national disaster for the Jews. Although an unscrupulous opportunist and adventurer, Agrippa was nonetheless very defensive of Jewish religious sensibilities. Accordingly, he went to Rome, arriving there in the early fall of 40, to see if he could do something to have the order revoked. He was determined to act in defense of Judaean interests even at the risk of his life.

According to Josephus, he invited Caligula to a banquet in the emperor's honor that was exceptionally lavish for Rome. Caligula, well pleased with the tribute being paid to him in this sumptuous affair, drank a good deal and openly declared to Agrippa that he would grant any favor that the latter might

request. Agrippa shrewdly demurred, asserting that he hoped that the emperor did not think that he had staged this elaborate affair to gain any personal advantage, noting that the emperor had already been extremely kind to him. Caligula responded by reiterating his offer even more forcefully. At that moment, Agrippa simply requested that the statue not be erected.[3]

Caligula was snared. He could not retract his offer to Agrippa, made in front of so many prominent witnesses. He therefore issued orders that if the statue had not yet been erected in the Temple, the project should be cancelled. Caligula was furious at having been outsmarted and sought a victim for his rage. Thus, when Petronius' letter arrived, he wrote back ordering Petronius to commit suicide. However, the ship carrying this message of doom was delayed because of a storm. By the time Caligula's message reached Petronius, another had already arrived announcing the assassination of Caligula on January 24, 41. Whether this story is a fabulous version of what actually took place, or is indeed an accurate accounting of events, cannot be known with any confidence. Suffice it to note that as a result of Agrippa's intervention, Caligula recanted and revoked his order regarding the erection of the statue in the Temple.

The emperor's death, which defused the mounting tensions in Judaea, came none too soon for Agrippa, who surely had risen toward the top of Caligula's list of persons to be eliminated as a result of his intervention. He had caused the emperor to rescind a decision affecting his personal stature as a deity. Ironically, because of his close connection with the mad Caligula, Agrippa had become one of the most prominent men in Rome. As such, he was to play a major part in the elevation of Caligula's uncle and successor, Claudius, to the imperial throne, a role that came about because Claudius and Agrippa had grown up together in Rome.

The unexpected death of Caligula left the capital in a state of confusion. The political orientation of the senatorial conspirators behind the assassination was toward the reestablishment of a republic. The praetorians, on the other hand, wanted an emperor, preferably from the line of Caesar, and in the process of searching the imperial palace discovered Claudius hiding in fear of his life. They decided that he should be their choice as emperor. Because of these fundamental differences in view over the future structure of the state, a crisis ensued that evoked the threat of imminent civil war between the opposing parties. At this point, Agrippa intervened. Fully aware that it would be to the advantage of both Judaea and himself if Claudius became emperor, Agrippa assumed the posture of a neutral third party. He insinuated himself into the position of intermediary in the critical negotiations between Claudius, whom he pressed to accept the appointment, the Senate, and the Praetorian

Guard. The net result of his successful mediation between the several parties was the proclamation of Claudius as emperor the very next day.

As a reward for his service to Claudius, Agrippa was made a consul of Rome and was awarded the entire procuratorial province of Judaea as an addition to the lands he already controlled. This meant, in effect, that the entire extensive Judaean kingdom of Herod was now reconstituted under the rule of Agrippa. It also seems likely that Claudius considered it to be a prudent move on his part, helping to restore peace and stability to Judaea at minimum cost. The appointment of Agrippa, a Jewish prince, as king would go a long way in demonstrating the sincerity of the new emperor's respect for the sensibilities of the Jews within the empire. Moreover, this was consistent with Claudius' general approach to dealing with Rome's client states. Thus, he also reappointed Mithridates and Antiochus, who had been deposed by Caligula, to their respective kingdoms of Armenia and Commagene.

Agrippa turned out to be a highly popular ruler, and his brief reign of three and a half years provided a sorely needed respite for Judaea from the tribulations of its onerous subjugation to Rome. The fact that he was descended from the Hasmoneans through his paternal grandmother made him far more acceptable to the people than the earlier Herodians. Moreover, Agrippa took pains to play down his Herodian ancestry and to act as a pious Jew whenever he was in Jerusalem, even though he was thoroughly Hellenistic elsewhere in his realm.

The period of Agrippa's tenure was also marked by a significant deterioration in the security situation along the Roman frontiers in Asia. The Roman-Parthian treaty of 36 effectively came to an end with the death of the Parthian king Artabanus in 40, although things remained relatively stable along the frontier while his two sons, Vardanes and Gotarzes fought for the succession to the Parthian throne. However, in the summer of 42, Vardanes became king of Parthia and soon undertook military maneuvers that clearly indicated an intention to attack Roman Armenia. In response, the legate of Syria, Vibius Marsus, threatened an invasion of Mesopotamia. At the same time, Mithridates, the king of Bosporus, indicated his determination to break loose from the Roman grip. These events had immediate repercussions throughout the lands of the Roman East, where many small nations began to dream of independence as war between Rome and Parthia loomed on the horizon. The Parthians had invaded both Syria and Judaea less than a century earlier and had repeatedly mauled the Roman legions, giving the lie to their presumed invincibility. This knowledge gave hope to the captive nations.

Caught up in the general swirl of events in the region, Agrippa recognized that the growth of Jerusalem, particularly toward the north where there were

no fortifications, left the city vulnerable to attack. He decided to erect a defensive wall that would have been virtually impregnable north of Bethesda in preparation for whatever might happen in the near future. However, when Marsus heard about it, he suspected that Agrippa might intend to use it against the Romans and reported it to Claudius, who politely told Agrippa to cease and desist from further work on the wall.

Nonetheless, the volatility of the international situation in the region was such that Agrippa felt it incumbent upon himself to make preparations for whatever contingencies might arise out of a Roman-Parthian war. Toward this end, he called the Roman client kings in the region to a meeting in Tiberias. Five such rulers responded affirmatively: Antiochus, king of Commagene; Sampsiceramus, king of Emesa; Cotys, king of Lesser Armenia; Polemon, king of Pontus; and Agrippa's brother Herod, who had been made king of Chalcis by Claudius. Agrippa's evident purpose was to forge an alliance between these minor states that would have put them collectively in a position to resist demands that might be made on them by Rome in the event of war, a stance that they could not each adopt individually. Once again Marsus intervened, correctly suspecting that this meeting of client kings did not serve the interests of Rome. He therefore interrupted the conclave and ordered the kings to return immediately to their own territories.

Agrippa saw this as a deliberate attempt to humiliate him; but there was nothing that he could do about it, although he did appeal to the emperor, unsuccessfully, to have the legate recalled. In fact, as a result of these events, in addition to Marsus' general jealousy of Agrippa's close ties and influence with Claudius, relations between the Judaean king and the Syrian legate became increasingly hostile, with unfortunate consequences for Agrippa. In the summer of 44, while attending the games at Caesarea in honor of Claudius, Agrippa became critically ill and died shortly afterwards, ostensibly because of some stomach ailment such as appendicitis. However, there is good reason, in view of the character of his relations with Marsus, to believe that he was poisoned on the latter's instructions.

When Claudius learned of Agrippa's untimely death, he planned to appoint Agrippa's son, Agrippa II, to the throne of his father's domain. However, Claudius' counselors, no doubt kept informed of Marsus' suspicions concerning Agrippa's loyalty to Rome, prevailed on the emperor not to make the appointment. They were concerned that Agrippa had been permitted to become altogether too independent as a client king. They also suspected that he relegated the interests of Rome to a lower priority than the well-being of Judaea, which had become his primary concern. Accordingly, they held that it would not be in Rome's interest to appoint his son in his place, thereby lending legitimacy to

Agrippa's suspect approach to relations with Rome. However, since they were unable to charge Agrippa with disloyalty because of his long friendship with the emperor, they convinced Claudius that Agrippa II, who was only 17 at the time, was simply too young to be entrusted with such a strategically important country. Instead they prevailed upon the emperor to place Judaea directly under the rule of the legate of Syria. Claudius agreed. But, because of the hostility that had existed between Agrippa and Marsus, and in deference to his deceased friend's honor, he replaced Marsus as legate of Syria with Cassius Longinus and appointed Cuspius Fadus as procurator of Judaea.

Since Claudius could have appointed the young Agrippa's uncle, Herod of Chalcis, to be regent of Judaea until the prince matured but did not elect to do so, it seems reasonable to doubt that Agrippa's age was really the reason for Claudius declining to make him king of Judaea. Although he had no reluctance in appointing Jews to be kings of other client states in the east, he apparently concluded that it would be a mistake to appoint another Jew as king of Judaea. Presumably, as long as the reins of government in Judaea remained in Jewish hands, the prospect of a resurgence of nationalism would be a continuing concern. It was better, in his view, to reduce the possibility of such a development by returning the country to the closer supervision that came with direct Roman rule. Thus, with the death of Agrippa I, Israel once again lost all vestige of national independence.

NOTES

1. *Philo*, vol. 10, *Embassy to Gaius*, p. 76.
2. Flavius Josephus, *Complete Works, Antiquities*, 18.8.2.
3. Ibid., 18.8.7.

Chapter 16

Prelude to the Great Revolt

The death of Agrippa I marked a watershed in Roman-Judaean relations. He was the last prince of his people who had a solid grasp of both worlds and was Judaea's last hope of finding a *modus vivendi* that would permit it to survive in the Roman sea. After him, the cultural gulf separating Judaea from Rome widened to the point where it soon became unbridgeable. As far as the Judaeans were concerned, the pagan Romans were incapable of understanding the ideals of Judaism and this failure made dialogue and accommodation impossible. From the Roman standpoint, the Judaeans were barbarians and atheists, since they worshipped an invisible God and remained stubbornly aloof from the virtues of Graeco-Roman civilization. The Romans considered themselves as extraordinarily tolerant since they permitted the Jews to practice their religion freely, without requiring them to participate in the imperial cult, which was mandatory throughout the rest of the empire. The Jews were exempt from erecting statues in honor of the emperors, although even they were required to offer sacrifices for the welfare of the emperors and Rome.

Agrippa's brief reign had the unintended consequence, as Claudius may have suspected, of giving new life to Judaean national feeling. The more extreme nationalists, who had apparently remained quiescent under Agrippa, were clearly disturbed by the abolition of the Judaean monarchy once again, after its brief revival, and the return to direct Roman rule. Their dissatisfaction with the prevailing state of affairs was soon reflected in the resumption of clandestine nationalist activity. Thus, when Cuspius Fadus (44–46) took up his

post as procurator, he was immediately confronted with disturbances stirred up by the Zealots in Judaea and by other activists in Peraea. In the latter, a conflict erupted between the Jews of the region and the non-Jewish residents of Philadelphia over the boundary between Jewish Peraea and the Hellenistic town. A similar outbreak of violence took place over the frontier separating Idumaea from Arabia. In addition, there was an upsurge of Apocalyptists and others who went around and preached the approach of the kingdom of God, asserting that divine intervention would soon destroy the power of Rome, a teaching that further bolstered messianic expectations, especially that of providential deliverance from the Roman oppressor. The volatility of the situation was further compounded by the lack of understanding or sympathy from the Roman officials in the country for the religious sensibilities of the Judaeans, who were increasingly subjected to abusive and offensive conduct by the pagan troops.

Since the death of Agrippa, there was no central leadership among the Judaeans capable of commanding the general respect of the people. The high priesthood, which had once fulfilled such a role, had been debased by corruption and no longer had the authority it once wielded. The economy also had deteriorated sharply as the country was struck repeatedly by famine. This helped drive a wedge between the wealthier classes, which were interested in preserving the status quo, and the peasants, who were impoverished by the agricultural failures and who enthusiastically joined the new revolutionary movements that preached social equality. Thus, the nationalist ferment was accompanied by a growing class conflict, all of which contributed to making the political situation in Judaea explosive.

Fadus applied strong military measures and soon restored order in Judaea by force, at least for the moment. He also took some additional steps that he believed would serve to strengthen Rome's ability to control the turbulence-prone country. To emphasize Judaea's loss of independent status, in the spring of 45 C.E. he decided to bring the vestments of the high priest under Roman custody in the Antonia fortress once again. This was a reversal of the policy of Vitellius who had authorized the return of unfettered control of the articles to the Temple authorities in 37. Fadus apparently was convinced that by doing this he would achieve greater leverage on the behavior of the high priest, who was still considered to be the most prominent and authoritative public figure among the Judaeans despite his debased status.

Although the Temple authorities did not dare reject the procurator's demand that the vestments be turned over to him, they procrastinated in complying with it. Fadus too was careful about forcing the issue since he did not wish to provoke renewed disturbances. The result was a stalemate. However, popu-

lar indignation over the prospective loss of this symbolically important privilege became so great that the legate Cassius Longinus became concerned about the possibly violent reaction that it might provoke. He marched to Jerusalem from Syria with a large contingent of troops to guard against rioting and to hold an inquiry on the explosive question. To avoid an eruption over the matter, Cassius induced both sides to refrain from further aggravating the situation. It was decided that a Jewish delegation should go to Rome and place the issue before the emperor and that nothing was to be done in the meantime that might prejudice or alter the status quo.

With the strong encouragement of the young Agrippa II, who was still living at the imperial court in Rome and who remained very close to the emperor, Claudius chose the course of conciliation and agreed to grant the request of the Judaean representatives. He issued an edict ratifying the status quo as established by Vitellius with regard to the control of the sacred vestments. Moreover, in an additional gesture of consideration toward the Jews, the power of appointing the high priest was taken away from the procurator and awarded to Agrippa's uncle, Herod of Chalcis. Claudius evidently believed that the Judaean leaders would appreciate such a move. However, while transferring this power from a Roman to a Jew did have some symbolic significance, it clearly did not satisfy the longstanding demand that appointment of the high priest be removed from the political arena and returned to the Judaean religious authorities, that is, to the Sanhedrin. From the latter standpoint, the gesture merely represented another failure on the part of the Roman government to understand the issues underlying the persistent Judaean concern for communal and religious autonomy.

With stability restored in Judaea once more, Fadus was relieved of his post as procurator. Claudius became convinced that Jewish discontent with Roman rule had a fundamentally ethnic rather than a political basis and therefore appointed Tiberius Julius Alexander, a nephew of the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria, to be the new procurator (46–48). He hoped that Tiberius Alexander, a Jew by birth although an apostate by religious belief, would have a better understanding of the sensibilities of the Judaeans and therefore be better able to maintain order in the country. Claudius failed to comprehend the disdain with which apostates were viewed by the Jews, and thus created a particularly awkward situation by this appointment. Tiberius Alexander soon proved incapable of achieving what Claudius had expected of him. Quite uncomfortable in his role as procurator, he felt constrained to continually demonstrate his complete loyalty to Rome and therefore refused to tolerate any public agitation whatsoever against any aspect of Roman rule. Tiberius Alexander thus ordered the crucifixion of James and Simon, sons of Judah of Galilee who had led the

original Zealot revolt against Rome in the days of Quirinius, even though there was no evidence of any serious threat of revolt emerging from the group of nationalists led by them.

By the time that Ventidius Cumanus (48–52) replaced Tiberius Alexander as procurator, the situation in Judaea had become increasingly unstable. At the very outset of Cumanus' tenure, Herod of Chalcis, who was a sympathetic advocate of collaboration with Rome and therefore a strong force for stability in Judaea, died. Deprived of his calming influence, Cumanus soon proved incapable of preventing disturbances and the country appeared to be on the verge of anarchy. To make matters considerably worse, Cumanus recruited his indigenous troops from the gentile inhabitants of Caesarea and Sebaste, pagans who were on very bad terms with their Jewish neighbors. It should have been obvious to the procurator that the use of such troops to police Judaea was a prescription for disaster.

A serious incident soon occurred in Jerusalem on the Passover festival, when part of the garrison of the Antonia fortress was deployed on the roofs of the porticoes around the Temple enclosure, a not unusual procedure employed to assure public order, given the large crowds present in the city. One of the soldiers used the occasion to expose himself indecently in full view of the crowds, as an expression of his disdain for the Jews. This deliberate insult by a gentile to the sanctity of the Temple precincts and the implicit desecration of the festival provoked a storm of fury from the worshippers. The full blame for the incident fell on Cumanus who was ultimately responsible for the discipline and decorum of his troops. The procurator's efforts to calm the crowd proved of no avail. When some in the crowd began to hurl stones at the troops on the portico roofs, Cumanus sent troops directly into the Temple enclosure, compounding the outrage and creating a panic during which many people were trampled to death.

Shortly afterward, a group of embittered pilgrims returning to their homes along the Jerusalem-Joppa road encountered a party of Roman officials near Beth Horon, and in their rage assaulted and robbed them. Notwithstanding that Cumanus could not permit such an attack to go unpunished, he reacted with disproportionate measures. The procurator sent troops to plunder the villages near the scene of the incident and had the leading villagers arrested for not having apprehended the perpetrators themselves. In the course of the military operation, one of the Roman soldiers removed a Torah scroll from a village synagogue, tore it in two and set it ablaze in full view of the villagers. Given that the Jews considered the destruction or obliteration of the written name of God as a major sacrilege, the act of the soldier was considered a deliberate provocation that inflamed Jewish passions. This time, to prevent a repetition of the ear-

lier disorders in Jerusalem, when the incident became widely known and crowds of protesters descended upon Cumanus in Caesarea, he had the soldier beheaded in front of his accusers. This was probably done because the soldier was undoubtedly also guilty of both insubordination and of having placed the Roman authorities in an embarrassing position, given the religious privileges accorded to the Jews under Roman law. Cumanus' prompt action served to assuage Jewish indignation and to restore calm, at least for the moment.

A critical point in Cumanus' relations with the Judaean community was soon reached as a result of his involvement in a dispute between the Samaritans and the Jews. To pass from Galilee to Jerusalem, a traveler had only two practical options: detour through the Jordan Valley and Jericho or pass through Samaria along the road through the village of Jenin, the border post between Samaria and Lower Galilee. The latter, a direct and shorter route through the more populated part of the country, was clearly the one preferred by most travelers. In 51, the Samaritans attacked a group of Galilean Jews passing through Samaria on their way to Jerusalem to celebrate one of the festivals and killed a number of the pilgrims. The Galileans complained to Cumanus who paid no attention to them, perhaps having been bribed by the Samaritans to ignore the incident.

Infuriated by the procurator's lack of response to a legitimate complaint and ignoring appeals from the established leadership for calm, the Galileans appealed to their fellow Jews in Judaea to take up arms against the Romans. A sizeable band of outraged Jews, under the leadership of Eleazar ben Dineus, marched north from Jerusalem to retaliate against the Samaritans by attacking and plundering a number of their villages. Cumanus now became aroused from his apathy and left Caesarea for Samaria with a large contingent of troops, which were augmented there by some Samaritan levies. Order was soon restored in the area, with many of the Judaeans and Galileans killed and captured in the process.

The Judaean leadership in Jerusalem, dominated by pacifists, became extremely fearful that such overt acts of rebellion would lead to open conflict with the Romans, a struggle that the Judaeans could not possibly win. Going into public mourning over the prospective destruction of the Temple and their homeland, they succeeded in convincing most of the Galileans to lay down their arms and return to their homes. Even though a number of the activist leaders went into hiding in their fortified redoubts in the mountains, the immediate threat of an insurrection dissipated.

The Samaritans, however, saw the moment as ripe to further aggravate Roman-Judaean relations and sent a delegation to see the Roman legate of Syria, Ummidius Quadratus, who had replaced Cassius as governor in 50. Quadratus

had been granted extraordinary powers in the Roman East by the emperor and therefore could intervene in Palestine at will. The Samaritans shrewdly explained to the legate that they were complaining to him about the Judaean attacks, not because of the damage done to their property, but because of the disdain for Rome shown by the Judaeans in having taken the law into their own hands. For their part, the Judaeans, who sent their own delegation to the legate to argue their case, accused the Samaritans of having started the conflict, and claimed that the procurator Cumanus had been bribed to ignore their just claims.

Quadratus went to Samaria to investigate the matter for himself and concluded that the Samaritans bore the primary responsibility for what had happened. However, because of Samaritan charges that the Judaeans were planning a rebellion against Rome, he essentially ignored Samaritan culpability and focused instead on the Judaean threat. Accordingly, he ordered the crucifixion of all the Judaeans that Cumanus had found bearing arms, followed by the decapitation of 18 of the Jewish ringleaders involved in the specific attack in Samaria. Having dispensed this summary justice, he referred resolution of the underlying conflict between the Samaritans and the Jews to Rome. He authorized two small deputations of Samaritan and Judaean notables, along with Cumanus and his chief of staff Celer, to go to Rome and present their arguments before Claudius.

In Rome, Claudius' advisers backed the procurator and the Samaritans, while Agrippa II, who had been given the throne of Chalcis upon the death of his uncle, Herod, and had remained close to the emperor, threw himself wholeheartedly into the defense of the Judaeans. With the support of Claudius' wife Agrippina, Agrippa prevailed on Claudius to rule in favor of the Judaeans. The Samaritans were condemned for their part in the affair and three of their leaders were executed. Cumanus was banished and Celer, who was held directly responsible for the reprehensible conduct of his troops, was sent back to Jerusalem for execution. Claudius evidently believed that the unusual sight of a Roman officer receiving capital punishment for his deeds against the Judaeans would serve to convince the latter of the emperor's sincere wish to establish a just regime in their country.

After this affair, Agrippa, who had served as ruler of the principality of Chalcis for three years, received a significant promotion from Claudius. He was now made king of the former tetrarchy of his great-uncle Philip, together with the fertile region of Abilene, northwest of Damascus, and the Anti-Lebanon, which had been merged with the province of Syria since 49. He was also given the authority over the appointment and disposition of the high priests, previously held by his uncle, Herod of Chalcis.

However, it was already too late to diffuse the growing sentiment for revolt. Gestures such as the execution of a Roman official had little impact on the people. The nationalist movement of the Zealots had already reached the point where it would be satisfied with nothing less than sovereign independence. The Zealots had seized the political initiative from the Temple aristocracy, and the teachings of the pacifist Pharisees that the people should await the advent of the Messiah for their political redemption became increasingly less persuasive against the powerful self-help rhetoric of the Zealots. It was no longer the fact of the harshness of Roman rule that was at issue, and therefore Claudius' efforts at amelioration and conciliation were of no effect. The issue now was the very fact of Roman rule.

The only viable policy for Rome under such circumstances was either to abandon the country, which was essentially unthinkable, or to use overwhelming force to subdue the population and quell the revolt. Claudius, however, was not prepared to adopt either course, hoping that some reasonable accommodation would ultimately be reached that would preserve the essence of the status quo. His sole response to the escalating tensions was to appoint a new procurator, Marcus Antonius Felix (52–60), whom Quadratus had already made acting governor pending Claudius' decision with regard to Cumanus. Ironically, Felix's appointment was requested by a former high priest, Jonathan ben Ananus. The latter was almost certainly acting on behalf of Agrippa II who wanted to cement his relations with the powerful Pallas, the ally and paramour of the empress Agrippina, by finding suitable employment for Pallas' brother Felix. The Roman historian Tacitus, who had little regard for Felix, characterized him as one who "indulging in every kind of barbarity and lust, exercised the power of a king in the spirit of a slave."[1]

Under Felix's procuratorship, the Zealots became ever bolder and even the application of increasingly oppressive measures against the population by the Romans had little deterrent effect on them. Felix, assured of imperial favor or at least indifference because of his connections in Rome, decided to deal with the problem by the physical elimination of the rebels who were hunted down and summarily executed. However, one of the unintended consequences of his apparently successful suppression of the Zealots was the emergence of the Sicarii, a Zealot splinter group which differed from the main body of nationalists in the underlying motivation for their revolutionary activity.

As argued by one historian of the period, the Zealots were essentially a political liberation movement, whereas the Sicarii represented a messianic movement that was primarily social in orientation. However, in all other respects of fundamental religious outlook, both movements were clearly pharisaic in character.[2] Under the conditions of repression imposed by the Romans, the Sicarii

adopted assassination as their primary means of continuing the liberation struggle. Felix himself contrived to have the Sicarii eliminate his Judaean sponsor, the former high priest Jonathan, who had once too often admonished the procurator to act with greater prudence. The Sicarii were only too pleased to accommodate Felix by killing a prominent collaborator with the Romans.

Back in Rome, Claudius was himself murdered in 54, ostensibly at the instance of his wife Agrippina so that her son Nero might succeed to the throne. Nero soon became engaged in coping with a new threat that emanated from Parthia and asked Agrippa for some troop support, which the latter readily provided. Perhaps as a reward for his loyalty and assistance, Nero subsequently enlarged Agrippa's territories by the addition of four toparchies. Despite the fact that they were not permitted to play any significant role in the governance of Judaea, the Herodians continued to be viewed with favor as staunch supporters of Rome. This was demonstrated clearly when Agrippa's cousin Aristobulus, the son of Herod of Chalcis, was made king of Lesser Armenia, a strategically located dependency that was vital to the security of the Euphrates frontier. Agrippa later paid honor to Nero by renaming Caesarea Philippi, his capital, as Neronias.

However, none of this had any tangible effect on the overall situation in Palestine, and particularly on that which prevailed in Judaea. Felix, effectively protected by the patronage of Nero's mother Agrippina, remained in office until after her murder in 59. In the meantime, the insurrectionary mood in the country continued to grow stronger and before long would become irrepressible. By the time that Nero appointed Porcius Festus (60–62) to the procuratorship, the country was in a virtual state of anarchy. Festus, despite his serious efforts to restore order, appeared incapable of achieving much. With his death in 62, matters only became worse. Pending the arrival of a replacement, in a dramatic though temporary change in Roman policy, the responsibilities of the procurator were assumed by the high priest Ananus in the hope that he might be more effective in defusing the crisis than another Roman. However, Ananus exercised the supreme civil authority with such great and uncompromising zeal that he succeeded in making the situation even worse. As guardian of the sacred vestments, Agrippa still retained the power of appointment of the high priest and he deposed Ananus after only three months. Ananus' brief stint as acting governor was so oppressive that the populace felt somewhat relieved by the arrival of the new Roman procurator Lucceius Albinus (62–64). The latter, however, proved no more successful than his predecessors, and in some respects was far worse than any of them. He was perhaps excessively prone to corruption and was prepared to look away from seditious activities for a price;

his primary goal appeared to be to enrich himself rather than to restore order in the province.

Under Gessius Florus (64–66), the last of the procurators, who was an even worse administrator and more corrupt than his predecessor, matters began to get completely out of hand; and a full scale revolt seemed to be inevitable. As Tacitus observed, "The endurance of the Jews lasted till Gessius Florus was procurator. In his time the war broke out."[3] Florus contributed significantly to the effectiveness of Zealot anti-Roman propaganda and recruitment efforts through his arbitrary and capricious conduct. He plundered whole districts of the country, driving many of those Judaeans who wanted peace and stability above all to seek refuge elsewhere, as conditions of life in Judaea became intolerable. It seemed as though the procurator was deliberately trying to force an explosion in the volatile province. He presumably believed that it would be easier to crush an open revolt than suppress sedition. If this were his true intent, it was not long before he succeeded in his objective.

The flashpoint turned out to be not Jerusalem but Caesarea. Herod originally founded the latter as a culturally Greek city in which Jews settled in large numbers as resident aliens rather than as citizens. Relations between the overwhelming gentile majority and the Jewish community there appear to have been reasonably amicable until the middle of the first century, by which time the Jewish population had increased significantly in size. The Jews of Caesarea came to feel that their numbers justified a reconsideration of their political status in the city, in which their political rights continued to be limited. In essence, they wanted the citizenship that would allow them to secure a proportionate voice in the municipal government, to whose revenues they contributed a disproportionate share.

Toward the end of Felix's procuratorship, street fighting erupted in the city, with the Jews getting the upper hand. Felix intervened and his troops forced the Jews to capitulate. However, this did not solve the basic problem, which Felix subsequently submitted to Rome for the emperor's adjudication. Nero's decision in the matter confirmed the preeminence of the gentiles, a position that the Jews simply could not accept complacently. Consequently, their resentment at being kept in a second-class status served as the spark to ignite the revolt that was already well on its way because of far deeper and more fundamental reasons.

The squabbling between gentiles and Jews in Caesarea continued and in the spring of 66 resulted in a series of incidents provoked by the gentiles that cut to the heart of Jewish religious sensibilities. At the center of the controversy was a synagogue. It was located adjacent to a plot owned by a gentile, who not only refused to sell the property to the Jews even at an artificially inflated price, but

also deliberately began construction of buildings on the site that would have effectively blocked the entrance to the synagogue. Then, on a Sabbath, worshippers arrived at the synagogue to the sight of a gentile performing a parody of the Temple sacrificial rite at the entrance. A riot ensued that was promptly suppressed by Florus in a manner that further antagonized the Jews, who received no protection from Florus even after he had accepted a substantial bribe of eight talents for the purpose of his ensuring the security of the synagogue community from harassment. The Jews of Caesarea emerged at the short end of the rioting since the gentiles were well prepared for the melee they had planned to provoke. Under the circumstances, the Jews took the scrolls of the Torah from the synagogue and fled to safety.

When the Jews subsequently sent some of their elders to Florus to ask for his protection, discreetly reminding him of the eight talents they had already paid him for such consideration, he had them arrested. After this, the antagonism of the Jewish community was such that Florus stayed away from Caesarea to avoid making an already bad situation worse. At the same time, in a demonstration of extraordinary political ineptitude he chose to demand payment of 17 talents from the Temple treasury, presumably for tax arrears. The timing of this demand was seen by many as a deliberate provocation, and a number of Jerusalemites responded by organizing a street collection, begging coppers on behalf of the impoverished procurator. Florus became furious when he learned of this and went to Jerusalem in June 65 with an extra cohort of troops, demanding that the Sanhedrin identify those who organized the street collection so that they might be punished for their affront to the dignity of the procurator. When the Sanhedrin refused to comply, Florus let his troops loose to sack the Upper City and to take prisoners who were then scourged and crucified. This produced serious fighting in the streets of Jerusalem, causing more than 3,000 fatalities. The Zealots soon seized control of the Temple Mount while the Roman garrison was confined to the Antonia fortress.

A temporary standoff between the Zealots and the small Roman garrison in Jerusalem emerged, and quiet was restored to the city for a time as Florus withdrew and returned to Caesarea. Both Florus and the Sanhedrin sent independent and irreconcilable reports on recent events in Jerusalem to the legate of Syria, Cestius Gallus, who dispatched one of his officers, Neapolitanus, to Jerusalem to inquire into the true character and causes of the disturbances. Agrippa, who happened to be on his way home from a visit to Egypt, and who was in Jamnia at the time, was able to intervene to defuse the crisis. He convinced the Judaean leaders to downplay their outrage at the improper treatment they had received at the hands of Florus. After surveying the damage caused by the procurator's troops, with some evident sympathy for the Jews,

the emissary was able to return to Cestius with the report that the Judaeans were still basically loyal to Rome, but hostile to Florus.

The Jewish leaders, however, were under no illusion that the feeble and vacillating Cestius would take any steps to have Florus removed, and they pressed Agrippa and the high priest to send a delegation to Nero to register their complaints against the procurator. Agrippa did not think this to be a very good idea, but was wary of opposing it overtly given the rebellious mood of the people. He believed it to be essential that the Judaean leaders come to understand that Florus really was a reflection of the overwhelming power of the empire and that it would be counterproductive for them to go to Rome to demand his recall. That would be interpreted as an unacceptable challenge to Roman authority. He reminded them that, while they might profess their loyalty to Rome and insist that they were merely opposed to Florus, they had in fact already participated in acts of open rebellion against Rome. They had demolished the porticoes of the Antonia fortress and refused to pay tribute to the emperor. Accordingly, Agrippa argued that the course of greater wisdom for them would be to rectify these matters before they were formally charged with rebellion.

Agrippa's intervention had a salutary effect for a short while, and the collection of back taxes was begun as well as the repair of the Antonia porticoes. However, it was not long before resentment at what was seen as Agrippa's support of the despised Florus forced the prince to leave Jerusalem for his own safety. With the departure of Agrippa in the summer of 66, the last hope of averting war with Rome was lost.

NOTES

1. Tacitus, *The Complete Works, The History*, 5.9.
2. Joseph Klausner, *KesheUmmah Nilhemet al Herutah*, pp. 158–163.
3. Tacitus, *The Complete Works, The History*, 5.10.

Chapter 17

The Great Revolt Erupts

Contrary to the common sense view of the leaders of the Judaean establishment that war with Rome was entirely hopeless, those promoting the rebellion saw matters quite differently and believed that they had a reasonable prospect of success. Aside from those who anticipated divine intervention in their behalf, there were others who had good reasons for viewing the Roman position in Judaea as quite vulnerable. Indeed, at the time, it was possible to make a case for the precariousness of the Roman position throughout the entire Middle East.

The peace between Rome and Parthia, although still intact, seemed quite unstable and near collapse. Once again, the nub of the problem was Armenia. In 61 C.E., Tigranes of Armenia raided and plundered Adiabene, a vassal state of Parthia. Vologases, the king of Parthia, felt obligated to intervene and he mobilized his armies, apparently threatening an invasion of Syria. This forced the Roman legate, Gnaeus Domitius Corbulo, to place the country in a defensive posture. In the meantime, Nero decided to change the longstanding status of Armenia from a client kingdom to an integral province of the Roman Empire. He annexed it and appointed L. Caesennius Paetus as commander-in-chief of the army for the purpose of dealing with the Parthian threat to that country. The Roman commander engaged the Parthians in battle but was defeated decisively, registering one of the major military disasters suffered by Rome in its long history. Paetus was recalled and was replaced by Corbulo, who

was granted extraordinary authority in the region, comparable to that accorded only to Pompeius in his time.

The ignominious defeat of the Romans by the Parthians clearly demonstrated to the Judaean rebels that Rome was by no means invincible. Even though Rome had subsequently reestablished peace with Parthia, it was viewed as a fragile arrangement. The original Armenian attack on Adiabene surely had been carried out with Rome's consent; it was inconceivable that a Roman vassal would dare attack a Parthian vassal without the emperor's approval. But Adiabene's rulers were Jewish, as was part of its population. It therefore seemed reasonable to assume that if a war broke out between Judaea and Rome, Adiabene would likely come to Judaea's aid. Moreover, Parthia, which had a substantial and presumably influential Jewish community as well, might also be tempted to exploit the situation for its own political purposes and to enter the conflict on Judaea's side.

Agrippa did his best to disabuse them of such illusions. "Unless any of you extend his hopes as far as beyond the Euphrates, and suppose that those of your own nation that dwell in Adiabene will come to your assistance, (but certainly these will not embarrass themselves with an unjustifiable war, nor if they should follow such ill advice, will the Parthians permit them so to do;) for it is their concern to maintain the truce that is between them and the Romans, and they will be supposed to break the covenants between them, if any under their government march against the Romans."[1] Agrippa's pleadings failed to move those in favor of open conflict with Rome to reconsider their position.

The approaching conflict with Rome reached the point of no return because of two steps taken by the Judaeans. A band of the Sicarii under Menahem succeeded in seizing the fortress of Masada and massacring its Roman garrison. In Masada, the insurgents took over the vast armory, containing enough weapons to equip a force of 10,000 men, originally stored there by Herod the Great. This provided sufficient arms for the Judaeans to attack all the Roman garrisons in the country. At the same time, in Jerusalem, the priests were persuaded by Eleazar ben Ananias, the captain of the Temple or deputy high priest, to cease the daily sacrifices for the emperor's wellbeing, which had been offered in the Temple since the days of Augustus. This latter action, taken on June 19, 65, was the symbolic equivalent of a declaration of war on Rome.

The insurgent forces in Jerusalem had gained so much ground that the pro-peace party led by the former high priest Ananias was concerned that it would soon be too late to restore the imperial sacrifices and thereby avoid certain war with Rome. It therefore decided to use force to oust the Zealots from the Temple Mount. Still in control of the Upper City, they appealed to both

Florus and Agrippa for help in taking control of the Temple Mount as well as the Lower City, which was in the hands of Eleazar ben Ananias.

Florus, pleased that the revolt gave him the rationale he needed for a major assault on the populace, ignored the appeal, but Agrippa sent 2,000 cavalry in the hopes of ending the revolt before it was too late. It proved of little avail. After a week of indecisive fighting between the Judaean factions, the insurgents captured the Upper City, forcing Agrippa's cavalry along with the rest of the peace party to take refuge in Herod's palace. The rebels then seized the Antonia fortress and massacred its Roman garrison. Completely cut off, the forces besieged in the palace had no practical alternative but to surrender, which they did on September 9, 65. Agrippa and his troops, as well as the aristocrats of the peace party, were released and permitted to leave the city. The remnants of the Roman cohort that Florus had left behind in Jerusalem then retreated to the towers adjacent to the palace, which were placed under siege. The Roman force was compelled to capitulate and agreed to give up its arms in return for safe conduct out of the area. But, as the Roman commander Metilius led his disarmed men out of the towers, the enraged populace disregarded the word of their leaders and massacred them. By September 24, the Roman presence in Jerusalem had been completely eliminated. However, after the slaughter of two Roman contingents there was no longer any way of avoiding a full-scale conflict.

At the same time, the first signs of serious internal discord among the insurgents became visible. A power struggle between Menahem, commander of the Sicarii, and Eleazar ben Ananias, captain of the Temple erupted. Menahem attempted to usurp the leadership of the revolt and instituted a reign of terror in Jerusalem, killing the aristocrats and anyone else who posed a potential threat to him. Recognizing the danger not only to himself but also to the existing social order, Eleazar, in collusion with some of the peace party, contrived to have Menahem and a number of his followers assassinated. The rest of Menahem's followers, including Eleazar ben Jair who subsequently became the leader of the Sicarii, escaped to Masada.

The apparent breakdown of Roman authority in the country also had disastrous effects on the Jewish communities in the Greek cities. In Caesarea the gentiles seized the opportunity to settle old as well as new scores, particularly since the garrison that was massacred at Masada was from Caesarea. This resulted in the slaughter of as many as 20,000 of the Jewish residents of the city, with the remainder being expelled. Jewish reprisals in other cities led to counterreprisals in an escalating cycle of intercommunal violence. In the last analysis, it was the Jewish communities that suffered the most from the anarchy that pervaded the country.

While these events were taking place, Cestius Gallus was busy assembling an army of more than 30,000 men in Antioch. This force included the Twelfth Legion, units from two other legions along with auxiliary troops, large contingents (3,000 foot and 1,000 cavalry) supplied by Agrippa, who commanded his forces personally, by Antiochus IV of Commagene (5,000 archers), and Sohaemus of Emesa (4,000 cavalry and archers). In September 65, Cestius began his march south heading for Ptolemais, the gateway for an invasion of Judaea. He easily overran Galilee, where Sepphoris, the commercial capital of the district, adopted a pro-Roman stance that it maintained throughout the conflict, and established his forward base at Caesarea. From there he dispatched a small force to help secure his sea communications by taking the port of Joppa. In mid-October he began his march on Jerusalem. As a demonstration of Roman power presumably intended to intimidate the Judaean capital into capitulation, he razed the town of Lydda, even though it had offered no resistance. Fortunately, most of its inhabitants had already gone to Jerusalem for the Festival of Tabernacles, where they remained in anticipation of the coming Roman offensive.

Cestius apparently believed that the raging discord among the leadership of the revolt would facilitate the conquest of Jerusalem. He knew that there was still a strong peace party in the city, and he hoped that the appearance of a large military force at the gates of Jerusalem would demoralize the insurgents. Cestius began his attack on Jerusalem on November 17, 65 and, meeting with little resistance, he quickly occupied the Upper City. However, the rebels retained control of the Lower City and the Temple Mount. When some of the leaders of the peace party offered to open the gates to the Romans they were killed, and Cestius began attacking the walls of the Lower City. However, after about a week of fighting that produced no further gains, he decided to abandon the campaign and withdrew his army to Caesarea.

It seems reasonable to assume that there were several practical reasons for Cestius' retreat from Jerusalem. First, it was already late November, a time when the season for campaigning had already ended in anticipation of the winter rains. Second, it would seem that he was neither equipped nor prepared for a siege of uncertain length. Finally, he was justifiably concerned about attacks against his rear from guerrilla groups operating freely in the nearby hills. However, by breaking off the campaign at this point in the uprising, Cestius forfeited the opportunity to bring it to a rapid conclusion. As it turned out, Cestius' decision cost him dearly. Judaean guerrilla forces harassed him on all sides in hit and run attacks that cost him about 6,000 casualties and the loss of the emblems of the Twelfth Legion, a severe blow to the prestige of the Roman

army, before he was able to extricate his forces from Judaean-controlled territory.

The defeat of Cestius Gallus clearly terminated all hopes of a negotiated end to the conflict, and members of the peace party began to abandon Jerusalem. They were convinced that the basic reason for Cestius' inability to take the city was that he did not have enough troops for the job. But Rome had vast resources at its disposal and could not afford to allow Judaea to secede from the empire. Had this been permitted, it would have become a spark that would have ignited the entire region, prompting Rome's other client states in Asia to revolt as well. Furthermore, such chaos along the eastern frontiers would surely entice the Parthians into attempting to capitalize on the situation to Rome's disadvantage. Accordingly, many of the moderates in Jerusalem anticipated a major Roman attack with overwhelming power the following spring. However, with the population in a state of euphoria over their initial success, the peace party could not openly advocate compromise and accommodation; they would have been killed as traitors. The best that some thought they could do in face of the impending disaster was to save themselves in the hope that the Romans would credit their defection from the conflict. Others, however, elected to remain in the city, hoping to be able to exercise a moderating influence on the course of events.

The Temple aristocracy, which was generally opposed to the revolt, now accepted the inevitability of war and sought to exploit its prestige to take control of the direction of affairs. Since Agrippa and his family, the only credible candidates for a Judaean throne, had thrown their support to the Romans, a monarchy was out of the question. In January 66, a great assembly was convened in the Temple and an independent Judaean republic was proclaimed. The Sanhedrin, which already was in effect a council of state, was invested with additional executive powers; and a popular assembly, which had become defunct under direct Roman rule, was reconstituted as the ultimate authority in the state and was headquartered in the Temple court. In designating the supreme military commander and head of government, the leaders of the activist factions, Eleazar ben Simon and Eleazar ben Ananias, were bypassed in favor of a former high priest, Ananus, who was considered a moderate. Ananus was a realist and saw little hope of ultimate success in the struggle against Rome. His political strategy was to win the confidence of those favoring the war by actively preparing for the conflict, while at the same time hoping to convince them of the futility of attempting to defeat Rome and thereby getting them to abandon the revolt. This duplicitous approach was to have dire consequences, as it helped transform the revolt against Rome into a destructive civil war.

Toward the end of 66, Cestius Gallus reported his reverses to Nero, who was in Greece at the time planning to build a canal across the Peloponnesus and personally participating as an actor in the Olympic games. The legate, with some success, attempted to shift the primary responsibility for the disasters in Judaea on to the shoulders of the procurator, Florus. Not surprisingly, Nero concluded that it was essential to restore Roman control over the rebellious province, and the emperor appointed Flavius Vespasian, a general with successful military experience, to succeed the procurator as governor of Judaea, with the rank of legate. Vespasian took his son Titus with him as his second-in-command, while another son, Domitian, remained in Rome as a hostage against any possible attempt by his father to use his position to overthrow the increasingly unpopular Nero. Vespasian promptly sent Titus by ship to Alexandria to pick up another legion, the Fifteenth Apollinaris, while he himself traveled overland to Antioch where he found Agrippa waiting to join him with his army.

In the spring of 67, Vespasian mobilized his invasion force. He decided not to use the legion (Twelfth Fulminata) that had earlier suffered defeat under Cestius and relied primarily on the other two legions stationed in Syria, Tenth Fretensis and Fifth Macedonica, along with 18 cohorts of auxiliaries. In addition, he also had the forces of the three client kings, Agrippa, Antiochus, and Sohaemus who had earlier lent their support to Cestius, as well as a contingent of Nabataeans. Vespasian moved these forces south to Ptolemais, where he was joined by additional troops from Caesarea and auxiliary cavalry from Syria. With the addition of the legion that Titus brought from Egypt, Vespasian's army totaled some 60,000 men, a force double the size previously employed by Cestius. This was a clear indication both of the seriousness of the Judaean threat as well as the importance attached by Rome to the suppression of the revolt in the strategically valuable territory.

Vespasian received a pledge of support from Sepphoris, which served as his forward base of operations in Galilee. From there an advance party of 1,000 cavalry under the tribune Placidus struck out across the countryside, ravaging the district and driving the irregular forces they encountered into the walled fortresses prepared by the Judaean regional commander, Josephus. When Vespasian invaded Galilee in force, the Judaean army that was concentrated near Sepphoris collapsed and dispersed before engaging the Roman forces. Its commander, Josephus, who was never really supportive of the war, fled first to Tiberias with a handful of troops and then to the fortified town of Jotapata, where he prepared for its defense against the Romans.

Vespasian made two unsuccessful direct attacks on the fortress of Jotapata, suffering as many casualties as he inflicted. However, Jotapata had no natural

spring and was therefore dependent on stored water, which soon began to run low. Aware of this, Vespasian chose to wait until the Jewish garrison was weakened by thirst before making another frontal assault. He placed Jotapata under close siege in June 67, hoping to force it into submission before the autumn rains began. As the weeks went by, and the Romans still failed to take the town, the seemingly successful defense of Jotapata began to have a positive effect on the morale of the people of the region. The walled town of Japha, about ten miles from Jotapata, declared in favor of the rebels and Vespasian had to divert forces from the siege of Jotapata to reduce it. After a brief battle on the outskirts of the town, a Roman army under Trajan, father of the future emperor of that name, joined by another force under Titus, succeeded in storming Japha on July 12, 67, when they massacred some 15,000 people and then sold 2,130 captives into slavery. Word of what was taking place at Jotapata also reached Samaria, where it seems to have inspired defiance of the Romans by the traditionally pro-Roman Samaritans, who assembled en masse on their holy mountain of Gerizim. On July 14, 67, Sextus Cerialis Vettulenus, commander of the Fifth Legion, attacked and carried out a massacre that left 11,600 Samaritan dead.

Finally, after a seven-week siege that sapped the strength of its defenders, the fortress of Jotapata was taken on July 24. The battle for the bastion had cost the Judaeans some 40,000 casualties, with only 1,200 taken prisoner. Josephus, whom Vespasian wanted alive so that he could be sent to Rome, accepted the legate's offer of life for his surrender. Vespasian subsequently changed his mind and kept Josephus, who was to become the primary chronicler of these events, with him as an honored prisoner, supposedly after he predicted that Vespasian was destined to become emperor of Rome.

Although his primary effort during the first phase of the campaign was focused on subjugating Galilee, Vespasian found it necessary to divert forces further south, as a matter of priority, to restore control of his sea communications. During the summer months, the period of the northwest winds, direct sea travel from Alexandria to Italy across the Mediterranean was impossible and westbound vessels had to make their way along the coasts of Palestine, Syria, and Asia Minor, and then across the Aegean to the Adriatic. However, shortly after Cestius Gallus' withdrawal from Jerusalem to Caesarea, the insurgents managed to seize the port of Joppa, which they used as a base for attacking Roman shipping in the coastal waters. This not only threatened Vespasian's sea communications with Greece and Italy, but also disrupted the flow of grain from Egypt to Rome. Accordingly, Vespasian dispatched a force southward to retake the city. The success of the mission became assured by the fortuitous ar-

rival of a storm that wrecked the insurgents' fleet, taking a toll of some 4,200 Judaeans.

In the course of the uprising, Tiberias and Tarichaea (Migdal), towns belonging to Agrippa, were taken over by the rebels. Nonetheless, pro-Roman sentiment remained strong in Tiberias, and Vespasian hoped to recover the town for Agrippa without too much difficulty. In August 67, he advanced on Tiberias with his three legions and the town capitulated almost immediately after offering some token resistance, the insurgents fleeing to Tarichaea. The latter town surrendered in late September after offering brief but ineffective resistance. It is noteworthy that Vespasian drew a sharp distinction between the citizens of the town, who were Agrippa's subjects, and the nonresident insurgents. Some 1,200 of the latter were massacred and more than 30,000 of them were sold into slavery. Another 6,000 of the younger men were sent to Greece to work on Nero's Corinthian canal, while the permanent residents were handed back to Agrippa along with the town.

Vespasian next turned to the remaining pockets of resistance in Galilee, making a detour into Agrippa's territory of Gaulanitis where the latter's troops had been besieging an insurgent force in the fortified town of Gamala without result for some seven months. The resistance of the rebels ensconced in the fortress, in addition to the natural defensibility of their position, was such that it took Vespasian's three legions more than a month to take it by storm. The town finally fell on November 10, 67, amid the usual massacre of its defenders. The final remaining rebel position in Galilee was Gischala. When John of Gischala, the commander of the insurgents, realized that the town could not withstand a siege he slipped away to Jerusalem with a small band of followers, allowing the town to surrender without offering any resistance. By then it was already late in the fall, and Vespasian halted the campaign for the winter, satisfied that he had achieved his immediate goal—the complete subjugation of Galilee.

The campaign was resumed in the spring of 68 with a thrust into the heart of Judaea. By June, Jerusalem was virtually isolated, as the rest of the province was quickly subdued. To the east, in Peraea, Gadara (Es-Salt) had capitulated, but rebel forces continued to offer strong resistance in the countryside, particularly from the fortress of Machaerus which had fallen into their hands. Vespasian left one legion there to clear the area of rebels while he swept through Judaea and Idumaea where he took Begabris (Beit Jibrin) and Caphartoba (Et-Taibeh), inflicting some 10,000 casualties on the Idumaeans. Samaria, long hostile to the Jews and sobered by the massacre the Samaritans suffered on Mount Gerizim the previous year, remained generally quiet, offering little if any opposition to the Romans. With only Jerusalem and eastern Judaea, primarily the fortress of Herodian, still in rebel hands, Vespasian established a ring

of camps around the area, effectively sealing it from the outside. It appeared that the final drive on Jerusalem was imminent.

NOTE

1. Flavius Josephus, *Complete Works, Wars of the Jews*, 2.16.4.

Chapter 18

The Fall of Jerusalem

When Vespasian returned to Caesarea to prepare for the assault on Jerusalem, he was greeted by the news of Nero's death on June 9, 68. Since a general's commission formally lapsed with the death of the emperor who had appointed him, Vespasian ostensibly decided to suspend operations until he was confirmed by Nero's successor. However, his real reason for standing down appears to be that he did not want to be preoccupied on the battlefield in Judaea at a time when unprecedented events were taking place elsewhere in the empire.

For almost a century, Rome had enjoyed internal peace under the five emperors of the Julio-Claudian line. Theoretically, the principate came to an end with the death of the reigning emperor. In practice, however, it had become hereditary as a consequence of the prestige of the ruling house, which was such that it could survive even the outrages of Caligula and Nero. However, another factor in the succession was the relationship of the ruling house to the army. Since Augustus, who established the empire by force of arms, the emperors had all more or less been military leaders except for Nero. The latter's victories had been won for him by outstanding generals such as Corbulo, who had committed suicide at Nero's command, causing considerable disaffection with the emperor among the other army commanders.

Earlier, in the spring of 68, Gaius Julius Vindex, the Roman commander in Gaul, revolted against Nero. Preoccupied with a gymnastics contest in Neapolis, the emperor did not even bother to return to Rome to deal with the matter from the capital. Instead, he merely offered a large reward for the head

of Vindex and assigned Rufus Virginius Gallus, commander of the Roman armies in Germany, the task of disposing of the rebel. Rufus, who apparently was equally disaffected with Nero, came to an understanding with Vindex, who had no imperial ambitions of his own. They agreed that Servius Sulpicius Galba, the 73-year-old commander of the Roman armies in Iberia and a descendant of one of the few remaining aristocratic families of Rome, should replace Nero. Thus, although Nero's excesses had driven the Senate to declare him a public enemy, thereby precipitating his suicide and paving the way for his successor, it was evidently the army that had usurped the authority of the Senate in deciding who would actually become the next emperor. This was truly a momentous development that Vespasian was going to watch unfold with great interest.

The news of Galba's accession to the imperial throne was not accompanied by any mention of instructions for Vespasian concerning the Judaean campaign, apparently indicating that affairs were not going very smoothly under the new imperial regime. Vespasian decided to continue to await specific word from Rome before committing his army to another campaign. His procrastination was due more to a desire to clarify what the situation was in Rome than to get the new emperor's authorization. In the late autumn of 68, when further campaigning that year was already out of the question, Vespasian sent Titus to Rome to pay respects to the new emperor and to ask for instructions about the Judaean war. It appears that Vespasian's delay in sending Titus to see the emperor was due to negotiations being conducted behind the scene concerning the adoption of Titus by the childless Galba. This, presumably, was a shrewd political move on Galba's part to assure Vespasian's allegiance to him. However, when Titus, accompanied by Agrippa, reached Corinth in mid-February 69, he discovered that Galba had been assassinated and that Marcus Salvius Otho was made emperor by the Praetorian Guard on January 15. Given the true nature of his mission to Rome, Titus apparently felt that it was pointless for him to continue with his trip; and he turned back, although Agrippa continued on to the capital to seek confirmation of his throne from whomever was emperor when he got there.

In the meantime, even before Galba's death, another contender for the throne, Aulus Vitellius, had been proclaimed as emperor by the legions of Germany and had begun to march on Italy. After several weeks, Otho proceeded north to confront his challenger and the opposing forces clashed near Cremona with Vitellius emerging victorious from the conflict. The net result of all this for the war in Judaea was that Vespasian had wasted an entire year effectively sitting on his hands. It was not until the summer of 69 that Vespasian decided to wait no longer for an imprimatur from Rome, where things seemed

to be in a constant state of flux, and resumed military operations on his own authority.

In Jerusalem, the Judaeans failed to take advantage of the respite in the war to consolidate their resources to better prepare for the eventual renewal of hostilities. Instead, the factional disputes that began in earnest during the winter of 67–68 continued unabated and even intensified. There was a growing fear among the Zealots that the moderate provisional government, led by the Temple aristocracy, intended to betray the nationalist cause and come to terms with the enemy. This view was strengthened by Josephus' surrender to the Romans. To prevent this from happening in Jerusalem, John of Gischala and his partisans joined forces with the Zealots under Eleazar ben Simon in attacks on the moderates. They further sought to undermine the authority and prestige of the Temple aristocracy by taking control of the Temple, deposing the high priest and choosing a successor by lot, in violation of tradition. To achieve a complete break with the political tradition that had grown up around the high priesthood, which was widely considered to be suffused with philo-Roman tendencies, they chose a humble village stonemason, Phannias ben Samuel, from an obscure priestly clan, who was unrelated to any of the Temple aristocracy. Unfortunately, he was also woefully ignorant of the ritual duties of the high priests of which he was to be the last.

The outrages indulged in by the Zealots aroused a popular fury against them spurred on by the patriarch of the Pharisees, Rabbi Simeon ben Gamaliel, in cooperation with the high command under the deposed high priest Ananus. The latter, with a force of some 6,000, managed to reassert control over most of the Temple precinct, trapping the Zealots in the inner court while John of Gischala remained at-large outside the walls of Jerusalem. John appealed for help from Idumaea, charging that Ananus was preparing to turn the city over to the Romans. The appeal hit its mark since Ananus was a Sadducee. The Sadducees had always opposed proselytization and therefore traditionally refused to consider the Idumaeans, who had been converted generations earlier by John Hyrcanus I, as equals and treated them as second-class citizens. Given that the leaders of the Zealots were Pharisees, and that they were opposing the provisional government that was dominated by Sadducees, the Idumaeans welcomed the opportunity to march against Ananus. Before long a force of 20,000 reinforcements from Idumaea appeared before the gates of Jerusalem, which Ananus slammed shut in their faces. Nonetheless, the Zealots managed to smuggle many of them inside the city during a storm that took place that same night. By a surprise attack they quickly wrested control of the outer court of the Temple and raged through the city, killing Ananus in the process. With Jerusalem now at their mercy, the Zealots and Idumaeans

carried out a blood bath in which the moderate faction was decimated. The Zealots went to such extremes, however, that many of the Idumaeans wished to dissociate themselves from such brutality and withdrew from the city back to their homes.

In the meantime, Vespasian was urged by his staff to take advantage of the dissension among the Judaeans to mount an attack on Jerusalem as soon as the campaigning season began in March 69. But Vespasian was concerned that a concerted assault on Jerusalem at that time might serve to unite the otherwise warring factions. Instead, he preferred to allow them to wear themselves out in internecine strife before he undertook the siege of the city, and he temporarily redirected his attention to the pacification of the rest of the country.

Vespasian proved prescient as the republican government of Judaea was overthrown and a deep split developed between John of Gischala and his supporters and the Zealots under Eleazar ben Simon. Although there was now a major cleavage in the nationalist ranks, the factions did not come to blows until the early summer of 69. By that time a third contender for power emerged in the person of Simon bar Giora, a Sicarii leader from Masada, who appeared before Jerusalem with a small force. It was at this point that the extremists under both John and Eleazar unleashed a reign of terror. The remnants of the Temple aristocracy, backed by the populace as a whole, quickly came to view Simon bar Giora as a lesser evil and arranged for him and his men to be admitted into the part of the city still under their control. With their help Simon became master of a good part of Jerusalem and was formally acknowledged by the moderates as their leader and champion.

Thus, at the time when Vespasian was about to mount a major assault on Jerusalem, the split between John of Gischala and Eleazar ben Simon became irreparable, and Simon bar Giora set about working against both. Instead of uniting in face of the common threat, there were now three separate Judaean armies operating in Jerusalem. A group of some 2,400 Zealots under Eleazar controlled the inner court of the Temple. Another force of about 6,000 under John held the outer court and part of the Lower City, being wedged between the forces of Eleazar on one side and those of Simon on the other. The latter, with an army of some 15,000, controlled the Upper City and the remainder of the Lower City. By the summer of 69, the Romans had regained control of all the areas outside Jerusalem other than the three fortresses of Herodion, Machaerus, and Masada, as well a few pockets of resistance in the caves near the Dead Sea. Vespasian considered it safe to ignore these for the moment and concentrate his forces in an attack on Jerusalem.

Once again events conspired to give the Judaeans a temporary reprieve, which they again squandered in internal fighting rather than in mobilizing

their considerable overall strength for the coming decisive contest with Rome. When Vitellius marched to Rome with his German legions, the latter treated Italy as though it were hostile territory and ravaged the land as they proceeded. As a consequence, Vitellius caused a rift with commanders of the legions in the east who decided to challenge his rule by proclaiming an emperor of their own choice. It was learned that the army of the Danube was also disenchanted with Vitellius and would welcome an alternative. All eyes were cast at Vespasian who was urged to make a bid for the supreme power by Tiberius Alexander in Egypt and Caius Licinius Mucianus, the governor of Syria. With Vespasian's assent, Tiberias Alexander declared for him openly on July 1, 69. Two days later the Roman army in Judaea acknowledged Vespasian as emperor. By the middle of the month, through Mucianus' intervention, the Syrian legions declared for him as well. Agrippa, informed by his intelligence agents of developments in the east, slipped out of Rome before Vitellius learned of it and headed for home to join in support of his good friend. Once again the campaign in Judaea was suspended as Vespasian gave highest priority to the consolidation of his political position.

The period between July and December 69 provided the Judaeans with a rare opportunity. It was a time when Vespasian was most prone to reaching an accommodation that would bring the war to an end. Such a development would have strengthened his hand in the forthcoming struggle for control of the empire; he would not have to commit substantial forces to the conflict in Judaea that he could use more effectively elsewhere to consolidate his position. Accordingly, there is good reason to assume that it might have been possible to reach an accord with him that would have restored substantial internal autonomy in Judaea, perhaps even its re-designation as a client state or some unique arrangement that would have taken the sting out of Roman hegemony. Once again, however, there was no leadership in Judaea capable of overcoming the inertia that was surely leading toward the destruction of the country as a distinct entity. Such illusions that the extreme nationalists may have entertained at the outset of the rebellion concerning the relative fragility of the Roman position in the Middle East surely were dispelled by the reality of the overwhelming Roman power that stood poised for the final assault on Jerusalem. Yet the opportunity presented for preserving Judaea was squandered as the factions within Jerusalem continued their struggle for dominance while their country hovered on the brink of an unmitigated disaster. Indeed, the sages of the Talmud were later to state unequivocally that the Temple was destroyed because of the groundless hatred that divided the people.[1]

Vespasian convened a conference of his commanders in the east, in Berytus, to chart their course for the immediate future. His loyal client kings, Agrippa,

Antiochus of Commagene, and Sohaemus of Emesa also joined him there. At the meeting it was decided that Mucianus should lead the army into Italy to confront Vitellius; that Titus should assume command of and continue the war in Judaea; and that Vespasian himself should establish his base in Egypt. From Alexandria, Vespasian would be in control of the major source of Italy's grain supplies and therefore in a position to threaten to starve Rome into submission, if necessary. As it turned out, the seven legions of the Danube did not even wait for the arrival of Mucianus. They defeated Vitellius's army near Cremona at the end of October and then swept on to Rome. In Judaea, the campaign against Jerusalem did not recommence until the spring of 70, with the former procurator Tiberius Alexander serving as Titus' chief of staff.

The Roman army in Judaea was now augmented by the arrival of a fourth legion (Twelfth Fulminata) from Syria and an increase in the size of the contingents supplied by Agrippa and the other client kings. The arrival of this formidable force on the outskirts of Jerusalem compelled a temporary unification of the competing factions within the city, as they joined forces for an attack on the Tenth Legion while it was preoccupied in establishing its base camp. The attack, as expected, was soon beaten off, but gave an indication that the Romans could still be discomfited by concerted action. However, the lesson was lost on the contenders for power, none of whom would entrust command of the whole to any of the other leaders. The internecine struggle was given priority over the external threat.

The first to succumb in that struggle was Eleazar, who opened the gates to the inner courts of the Temple to worshippers during the Passover festival. John took advantage of the occasion to overwhelm Eleazar's Zealots and to impose his control over them. The competition was now reduced to the remaining two contenders, who proceeded with their civil conflict even as Titus moved his legions into camps established close to the city walls. It was only when the Roman battering rams were actually hammering away at the gates that John finally agreed to acknowledge Simon's leadership and collaborate in the defense of the city. Simon was to remain in charge of operations in the Upper City, while John took control of the Temple Mount and the Antonia fortress.

Unfortunately for the defenders, they had failed to take advantage of the several respites they had during the course of the long campaign to see to the completion of the defensive wall started years earlier by Agrippa I. It ran northwest of the city, the direction from which Titus, like his predecessors Pompeius and Sosius, would be compelled to attack. It was the only approach to Jerusalem that was not protected by steep ravines, and without a completed defensive wall Titus was able to break through without much difficulty. Another five

days of heavy fighting led to a breech in the second north wall, bringing Titus to the northern part of the west wall of the Temple. However, before he could assault the Temple, he first had to conquer the Antonia, which took him two months of hard fighting. It was a struggle that Titus would gladly have foregone were it possible for him to do so. As Dio Cassius relates, "The Romans suffered the most hardship from the lack of water, for their supply was of poor quality and had to be brought from a distance. The Judaeans found in their underground passages a source of strength; for they made tunnels, dug from inside the city and extending out under the walls to distant points in the country, and going out through them, they would attack the Roman water carriers and harass any scattered detachment."[2]

After taking the Antonia, Titus had the fortress razed to the ground to facilitate an attack on the Temple enclosure along a broader front. The day that the destruction of the Antonia began also marked the end of the daily sacrifices in the Temple because the supply of lambs in the city had been exhausted. This had a dramatic psychological effect on the populace, whose general despondency now increased significantly. Titus sought to exploit this mood of dejection by offering to negotiate a settlement to the conflict, but the offer proved counterproductive to his purposes. It was interpreted by John of Gischala and Simon bar Giora, who clearly had completely lost their sense of reality, as a sign of Roman weakness. Thus, the only effect it had was the unquestionably unintended one of further stiffening the Judaean determination to continue to resist.

Titus expected that once the Temple fell the rest of the city would capitulate, thus voiding the need to fight for every inch of it. However, he soon came to realize that the Temple could only be forced to surrender by the destruction of its defenses, which were every bit as formidable as the city walls. Accordingly, Titus concentrated the majority of his forces against the Temple. All four legions were thrown into the task of building siege works to overcome the outer wall of the Temple, which seemed impervious to bombardment. Finally, in August 70, on the 9th of Ab according to the Jewish calendar, Titus' troops broke into the Temple compound, forcing its defenders to retreat into the inner courts. The following day Titus held a meeting of his commanders to decide the fate of the Temple.

There is some reason to believe that Titus was prepared to spare it from destruction, although not necessarily in order that it continue to serve as the central religious shrine of the Jews, as some apologists suggest. After all, it was a magnificent structure that would have served other Roman purposes equally well. However, while the Roman soldiers were busy extinguishing the fires in the outer court, the Zealots emerged from the sanctuary and attacked them.

During the fracas, one of the Roman soldiers threw a firebrand into the priests' chambers along the north side of the Temple igniting a fire that was to consume the whole edifice. The sight of the Temple aflame had an incendiary effect on the Judaean witnesses as well. Dio Cassius writes, "They met death willingly, some throwing themselves on the swords of the Romans, some slaying one another, others taking their own lives, and still others leaping into the flames. And it seemed to everybody, and especially to them, that far from being destruction, it was victory and salvation and happiness to them that they perished along with the Sanctuary."[3]

The fall of the Temple did not bring about the immediate surrender that Titus anticipated. As the Temple was being destroyed, John and his men, unable to break out into the desert and reach Masada or Machaerus, escaped to the Upper City where they joined with Simon's forces to continue the struggle. Negotiations were opened between Titus and the two Judaean leaders. He offered to spare their lives in return for an unconditional surrender, an offer that they spurned. They knew that if they were permitted to live, it would only be for the purpose of being displayed in Rome in a triumphal procession celebrating the destruction of the Temple and the last vestiges of Judaean independence. They could never willingly agree to such a prospect. In their turn they offered to surrender Jerusalem to Titus in exchange for safe conduct out of the city for themselves and their families, an offer that infuriated the Roman commander. At an impasse, Titus turned to the conquest of the Upper City, which took him another month of hard fighting.

Although both John and Simon and a few of their followers escaped into the city's subterranean passages, they were soon either captured or forced to surrender out of hunger. As they dreaded, John and Simon were both taken to Rome to appear in Titus' triumphal march along with 700 of their most imposing fighters. The rest of the survivors were separated into categories for disposal. Those identified as rebels were executed. Other able-bodied men older than 17 were either sent to work in the mines in Egypt or kept for gladiatorial or wild beast shows. Children under 17 were sold as slaves, but the old and infirm were butchered in cold blood. With the exception of Herod's three towers and an adjoining section of the west wall that formed part of the permanent camp of the Roman garrison in the city, the walls of the entire city and of the Temple precinct were completely demolished.

As far as Titus was concerned the war was now over. He left the chore of cleaning out the rebels who remained ensconced in the fortresses of Herodion, Machaerus, and Masada to Sextus Vettulenus Cerealis, commander of the Fifth Legion, whom he appointed as temporary governor of Judaea until Vespasian could decide on the future of the country. Since it was too late in the

season for travel to Rome, Titus spent the winter with Agrippa in Caesarea Philippi and by traveling around Syria where he sponsored gladiatorial contests that saw the death of thousands of Judaean prisoners. In the spring of 71, confident that the Tenth Fretensis, along with some auxilliaries, would be sufficient to reduce the remaining rebel strongholds, he dismissed the other legions and returned to Rome to celebrate his triumph.

NOTES

1. *The Babylonian Talmud, Yoma* 9b.
2. Dio Cassius, *Dio's Roman History*, Epitome of Book 65.4.
3. Ibid., 65.6.

Chapter 19

Aftermath of the Destruction

The early period of Roman administration in Judaea was marked by two principal deficiencies: the poor quality of its governors and the inadequacy of the military forces permanently assigned to maintain order in the country. Vespasian, personally familiar with the consequences of these failings, undertook to make significant improvements on both counts. The province of Judaea was now elevated in status and placed under an imperial legate of praetorian rank, assisted by a procurator charged with the fiscal administration of the territory. At the same time, the military garrison in the country was bolstered by the permanent assignment of the Tenth Legion, supported by auxiliary forces. The enhancement of the Judaean garrison was also an integral part of Vespasian's restructure of the defenses along the eastern frontier, which now consisted of one legion in Palestine, three in Syria, and two further north in Cappadocia. Since any internal challenge to Roman authority in Judaea was likely to arise in Jerusalem, the bulk of the legion was to be stationed there rather than in the distant administrative capital at Caesarea.

The temporary governor appointed by Titus, Sextus Vettulenus Cerealis, who was charged with eliminating the last pockets of Jewish resistance in the caves along the Dead Sea and in the fortresses of Herodion, Machaerus, and Masada, apparently took no major actions in this regard. Although the Sicarii remained in control of the fortresses, they had refrained from making what would have been futile attempts to lend aid to those defending Jerusalem at a time when it was surrounded by four Roman legions. Nonetheless, they appar-

ently believed that it was their duty to keep up the resistance, no matter how hopeless, even if only for its symbolic significance as a demonstration of Jewish defiance of pagan Rome.

In 71 C.E., Vespasian appointed Sextus Lucilius Bassus, an experienced governor, as the first postwar legate of Judaea, and L. Laberius Maximus, as procurator. Bassus appears to have directed his attention first to the reduction of Herodion, which most likely fell late that same year. He turned next to Machaerus, which surrendered the following summer in return for a promise of safe conduct for its defenders. However, instead of dispersing upon their release, the Sicarii from Machaerus joined with groups of refugees from the siege of Jerusalem in a wood somewhere in the Jordan valley. Bassus considered this a violation of the spirit if not the letter of the surrender agreement and surrounded the area. The trapped Judaeans were pressed inward as the Romans felled the trees along the perimeter of the wood and, when they tried to break out of the trap, some 3,000 men were systematically massacred.

Bassus died before he could undertake the conquest of Masada and the campaign was delayed for several months pending the appointment and arrival of his successor, L. Flavius Silva. Given the earlier experience of Bassus with the defenders of Machaerus, Silva was determined to kill or capture all of the defenders of Masada and thereby preclude any further revolts. Early in 73, Silva established his headquarters at a point northwest of Masada and built another large camp diagonally across from this on the southeastern side of the mountain stronghold. These base camps were linked with six other smaller camps, and four small forts guarding a mountain pass to the north, in a two-mile ring around Masada designed to block all possible escape routes.

Although it would have been possible to reduce Masada through a siege that ultimately would have depleted the supplies and water stored in the fortress, Silva considered his own position to be too vulnerable to the elements for such an extended operation. By May, the intense heat would become unbearable and his supplies, especially water, had to be brought from a distance. Accordingly, he decided that a quick direct assault on the fortress was the only viable option. An enormous earthen ramp, topped by a flat stone and timber platform, was painstakingly constructed to provide a way up the steep cliff, and then an ironclad tower was erected on the platform that placed it at the height of the casement wall. By April the projectile-throwing devices had been hauled up the ramp and the bombardment began. From that point onward, the end was not long in coming. According to Josephus, the Judaean commander Eleazar ben Jair convinced his men and their families, nearly a thousand people, to make one last dramatic act of collective defiance and deny the Romans the glory of a final victory over the Jews. Instead of allowing themselves to be

taken captive, they would all take their own lives in a mass suicide, each person killing his neighbor. This was done, and when the Roman troops finally broke into the fortress all they found alive were two women and five children who had hidden themselves in a cistern.

The fall of Jerusalem in 70 and Masada three years later were marked as events of major importance in Roman history by both Vespasian and Titus. To commemorate the fall of Jerusalem, Vespasian issued coins with the legend *Judaea devicta* (Judaea conquered) or *Judaea capta* (Judaea captured). Titus did the same, after he became emperor in 79, to commemorate the conquest of Masada, which ended all resistance to Rome in Judaea. The strategic significance of this small strip of territory was such that the Senate recommended that these emperors affix "Judaicus" to their names, just as other emperors bore the names Germanicus or Particus in honor of their major triumphs. However, both Vespasian and Titus declined to do so, not because they did not consider Judaea of sufficient importance but because of a concern that the name Vespasianus or Titus Judaicus might lead to the impression that the bearers were themselves Jewish.

One of the major burdens imposed on the Jews after the conclusion of the war had both psychological as well as financial aspects. Despite the religious underpinnings of the revolt that caused so much trouble and expense to Rome, there was no attempt to suppress the Jewish religion. No restrictions of any kind were imposed on the rites and practices of the Judaeans, which underwent significant changes as a result of the destruction of the Temple and the termination of the rituals associated with it. Although suppression of Judaism may have seemed desirable, from a Roman perspective, as a means of preventing any future religiously inspired rebellion, it was simply considered to be inappropriate as an imperial policy. Since there were Jews spread throughout the empire, it was impracticable to prohibit the practice of Judaism in Palestine and to permit it elsewhere. On the other hand, it made little sense to deny religious liberty to the Jews of the empire, who were generally productive and law-abiding, because their co-religionists in Palestine were rebels. Furthermore, it was recognized that the Jews held to their religious beliefs tenaciously, and that any attempt to suppress the religion and forcibly assimilate them would engender fierce resistance, and serious outbreaks of violence would be assured. Accordingly, the Romans preferred to consider that their quarrel with the Jews of Palestine had been primarily one with Jewish nationalism and not with the religion to which it had accorded legal status for a century.

The Jews were therefore permitted to retain their traditional religious privileges, except for one. With the destruction of the Temple there was no longer any justification for the collection of the tax for the support of the Temple, a tax

that had been paid by Jews throughout the world. Vespasian, who was very much in need of money for reconstruction after the Roman civil war, sought to garner it in every possible manner and the now obsolete Temple tax seemed like a promising source. He therefore decided to tax the privilege of religious freedom and required all Jews, both those in Palestine and the Diaspora, to pay this tax to Rome, ostensibly for the benefit of the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus who presumably had triumphed over the God of Israel. He also significantly increased the numbers of those obligated to pay the tax. The Temple tax had been paid only by men between the ages of 20 and 50; it was now extended to include all persons, both male and female, from the age of three to 62 for women and apparently without any upper age limit for men. Moreover, there is some evidence that the level of the tax had been increased dramatically from the standard half shekel to a much higher amount. Thus, the leading Jewish sage of the period, Rabbi Johanan ben Zakkai, considered the Roman exactions to be punishment for the sins of his people. "You would not pay the tax of half a shekel to God, and now you pay fifteen shekels to the government of your enemies."[1] As a result of the impost, Judaism remained a legal religion only for those in the empire who demonstrated their allegiance to the state by paying the "Jewish tax." The Jews thereby effectively purchased the privilege of worshipping their own deity, and contracted out of the imperial cult, by making a payment to Jupiter. The annual collection of the Jewish tax was a recurrent reminder of Judaea's national humiliation and served as an irritant that prevented the sores of defeat from healing.

With the Temple and much of Jerusalem destroyed, the Judaeans now concentrated themselves in and around cities such as Jamnia, Sepphoris, and Tiberias, which had escaped destruction, and threw themselves into the task of national reconstruction. Given that further rebellion against Rome was no longer considered a serious possibility, the oppressiveness of Roman rule in Judaea diminished considerably during the reigns of Vespasian (69–79) and Titus (79–81). This improvement in the situation of the Judaeans was the result, to a considerable degree, of the continuing influence of Agrippa II and his sister Berenice at the imperial court in Rome.

The Judaean prince clung to his largely meaningless title of "king" and was able to retain his holdings in parts of Galilee while the rest of Judaea became the property of the emperor. He spent much of his time in Rome where he undertook to intervene in behalf of his fellow Jews, both in Judaea and elsewhere in the empire. Agrippa was able to do this because of his sister. It seems that a romantic connection had developed between Titus and Berenice while he was in Judaea, and it continued to flourish in Rome throughout the reign of Vespasian. At one point Titus intended to wed the Judaean princess, but was

dissuaded from doing so by his father and the Roman aristocracy, who frowned on the idea of the heir apparent entering into such a relationship. Accordingly, Titus was compelled to send his beloved away from Rome for a while. Berenice returned after Vespasian's death, but by that time Titus' ardor had diminished, and he was no longer prepared to act in opposition to the public sentiment which was against such a marriage. After this, Agrippa and his sister fade from the pages of history, although he is supposed to have survived until the end of the reign of Domitian (81–96). At that time, his lands in Galilee were annexed to the Roman province of Syria.

Unlike his predecessors, Domitian was openly hostile toward the Jews throughout the empire. During his reign, Romans who evinced an interest in Judaism or Christianity, which was considered as a Judaic sect, were persecuted severely. Such a predilection was viewed as criminal, and perpetrators were tried for atheism, that is, for disavowing the gods of Rome, which was considered the same as repudiating the Roman state itself, a crime punishable by death or exile. And, indeed, at least two Roman nobles, the senators Flavius Clemens and Acilius Glabrio, were executed for "Judaizing." There is reason to believe that the charge of Judaizing, as was to be the case 14 centuries later during the Inquisition, was also used as a means of disposing of political and personal enemies. Although the evidence is not clear, there appears to be a basis for concluding that the reign of Domitian also witnessed significant revolutionary activity in Palestine. This would explain why, in the year 85, fifteen years after the destruction of the Temple, Domitian saw fit to issue coins once again with the legend, *Judaea capta*. Furthermore, according to the church historian Eusebius, "Domitian gave orders that those who were of the family of David should be put to death."[2] Presumably, the emperor was concerned about latent Judaean nationalism and suspected that a pretender claiming descent from the House of David might be able to ignite a new revolt against Rome.

The Jews sighed with relief at Domitian's assassination at the hands of Romans who had become weary of his excesses. The Senate selected as his successor one of their members, the benign and moderate Marcus Cocceius Nerva (96–98). During his brief reign of 16 months the situation of the Jews throughout the empire improved somewhat. They were no longer subject to capricious charges that they were converting Romans to Judaism, or that they were evading payment of the required Jewish tax. During this short period, the tax was collected with greater discretion so as to avoid publicly embarrassing those subject to it. However, Nerva's generally humane tendencies proved to be a weakness when it came to exercising control over the vast Roman state; and, to bolster the authority of the emperor, he adopted the most distinguished general of his day, Ulpanius Trajan, who shared the throne with him. Nerva died

soon thereafter, and Trajan (98–117) was acknowledged as his successor by the army and Senate.

Trajan was far superior to his recent predecessors as both statesman and soldier, and the Jews of the empire probably benefited from the general prosperity that characterized his reign. Nonetheless, certain developments took place toward the end of his tenure that had great impact on the Jews, the roots of which reached back to the devastation of Jerusalem in 70.

The fall of Jerusalem had a centrifugal effect on the pattern of Jewish settlement, with tens of thousands of Judaeans either fleeing the devastation of their homeland, or being forced into captivity, in the lands of the Roman Empire and beyond. Large numbers of Judaeans thus augmented the Jewish communities of the empire in Asia Minor, Syria, Egypt, and North Africa. A substantial number also fled across the eastern frontier into the lands of the Parthians, most notably Mesopotamia. These exiles generally had at least one common characteristic, a fierce hatred of Rome that was soon communicated to the Jewish communities in which they settled. Indeed, immediately following the conquest of Jerusalem, remnants of the defeated Judaean forces that escaped to Egypt and Cyrenaica stirred up revolutionary activity against Rome in those countries that was suppressed by force in 73. This latent anger at the Romans was again brought to the surface by the anti-Jewish repression that characterized the 15-year reign of Domitian, which began only a decade after the destruction of the Temple. Nonetheless, the spirits of the Jews of the empire were so downtrodden that no serious attempt to challenge Roman authority was to be made for decades. However, during the latter part of Trajan's reign, when he attempted to extend the empire in Asia beyond the Euphrates frontier, a new spirit of revolt took hold among the Jews leading to widespread rebellions throughout the Roman East. Once again, the catalyst for the events that were to shake the region was Armenia, the critical frontier territory separating the Roman and Parthian empires.

Upon the death of the Armenian king Tiridates in 100, Pacorus II of Parthia took advantage of Trajan's preoccupation with a war with the Dacians in Europe and placed his own son on the Armenian throne. This was a clear violation of the existing Roman-Parthian treaty, which required Roman consent to a successor to the throne of Armenia, but Trajan was in no position to do much about it at the time. However, once the Dacian War came to an end in 113, he was free to turn his attention to Parthia. Trajan decided that the moment was ripe for a Roman attack because Osroes, who succeeded to the Parthian throne four years earlier, was still fully preoccupied with internal challenges and would be unable to mount an effective defense of his territories, much less to take the offensive. Strategic considerations made it necessary for Rome to conquer

Mesopotamia first before invading the Parthian heartland. Accordingly, Trajan crossed the Euphrates and handily conquered the northern plain of Mesopotamia in 115. Meeting little effective resistance, as he had anticipated, he crossed the Tigris in the following year and completed the conquest of Adiabene, which straddled the river. Trajan then seized the Parthian capital, Ctesiphon, and swept down the Tigris until he reached the Persian Gulf. In the meanwhile, Osroes kept retreating into the interior of Asia, nursing his resources, while Trajan's supply lines to his forces, which were operating in areas increasingly distant from their main bases, were being stretched thin. By 116 Osroes had sufficiently recovered to regroup his forces and begin to contest the Roman invasion. He was aided in this considerably by the Jews of the region.

As already noted, many refugees from the war in Judaea settled in other Jewish communities of the empire in the Middle East and North Africa. There they nurtured their anger against Rome, which was fueled by the new repression under Domitian. Nonetheless, the Jewish communities remained generally placid, the possibility of a successful rebellion being deemed quite unrealistic. However, when Trajan inaugurated his campaign against Parthia, he was forced to draw most of his troops from the Roman provinces in the east. As a result, the Roman forces on hand to suppress a rebellion were few in number and clearly inadequate for the purpose. Trajan, who undoubtedly was aware that there was a risk involved in removing large numbers of troops from these provinces, apparently sought to mitigate any rebelliousness on the part of the Jews by granting a major concession to them. Moreover, there was a large Jewish community living under Parthian rule in Mesopotamia, and it would serve his purpose for them to perceive the Romans, who were about to invade Parthian territory, in a favorable light. Accordingly, the Jewish communities were pleasantly surprised to learn of an unanticipated imperial pronouncement authorizing the restoration of the sacrificial rite in Jerusalem and the reconstruction of the Temple. As noted in the traditional Jewish literature, "In the days of R. Joshua b. Hananiah the [Roman] State ordered the Temple to be rebuilt."[3] The responsibility for carrying out the imperial edict was placed by the Romans in the hands of the proselyte Aquila, the disciple and friend of the well-known Rabbi Akiba, a principal leader of Palestinian Jewry.

The Trajan Declaration was greeted with such extravagant enthusiasm that a conclave of rabbis soon voted to make the date of the announcement, the twelfth of Adar according to the Jewish calendar, a permanent half-holiday to be known as Trajan's Day. Akiba, who became one of the principal negotiators with the Romans regarding plans for the implementation of the declaration, along with many other Jews, came to see Trajan's initiative as the beginning of the messianic era. In fact, the readiness of the Romans to permit restoration of

the Temple led Akiba to voice sharp criticism of the pacifist rabbinic leader of the previous generation, Johanan ben Zakkai. According to tradition, Johanan fled Jerusalem secretly before its conquest to establish an alternative center from which to perpetuate the teachings of Judaism. In Akiba's opinion, Johanan ben Zakkai might have been able to save the Temple from destruction in the first place had he negotiated with the Romans more forcefully. He observed, "The verse, *He turneth wise men backward and maketh their knowledge foolish* [Isa. 44:25], applies to Johanan ben Zakkai, as he stood before the Roman general begging for the academy at Yabneh, when he might have saved the Temple at Jerusalem."[4]

For the Judaean nationalists, however, the Trajan Declaration seemed to contain more illusion than substance, and they questioned what everyone was so excited about. At best, the proposed Temple, that was not to be rebuilt within a walled enclosure, would be but a modest replica of the edifice that had been destroyed. Furthermore, nothing had been said about Judaean autonomy, and the matter of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem had not even been given any consideration. In fact, the nationalists opposed the restoration of the Temple under the circumstances because it would undermine the movement for national liberation that they were promoting. However, while the nationalist opposition to the Temple was voiced only within Jewish circles, other opponents took public issue with the project.

Most notable among these were the Samaritans, the longtime foes of the Judaeans and Judaism, who were also adamantly opposed to implementation of the imperial policy. They are said to have argued before the authorities that the restoration of the Temple, and most especially the walls of the city, would engender a rebirth of Judaean nationalism that would seek secession from the Roman Empire. Give the Jews their Temple, they argued, and they will refuse to pay taxes any longer. According to a Jewish tradition, they advised Trajan how to get out of his promise to permit the reconstruction of the Temple. "Send a command to them that they must change its site or add five cubits thereto or lessen it by five cubits, and then they will withdraw from it of their own accord."[5]

The Roman governor of Judaea was apparently embarrassed by the controversy aroused by what was supposed to have been a shrewd policy designed to assure stability in the eastern provinces while the emperor proceeded with his Parthian campaign. Since he was surely acting on orders received from Trajan, he now began hedging on the implementation of the restoration. He apparently suggested that the Jews go ahead with the performance of sacrifices in the Temple area, but that the reconstruction of the Temple itself should be delayed until Trajan personally arrived in the east. This recommendation served to fur-

ther exacerbate the mounting tensions in Judaea. The prominent Joshua ben Hananiah, who put his faith in the sincerity of the Roman officials, was willing to accept this compromise, but the nationalists rejected it out of hand. More than ever, the Romans became convinced that the Trajan Declaration had been a mistake.

The issue came to a head with the arrival of Trajan in the region to pursue the war with Parthia. Preoccupied by the conflict with Rome's major antagonist, he had little time or interest to deal with the questions surrounding his rather arbitrary pronouncement, and he responded to the complaints laid before him with equal arbitrariness. Trajan decided, presumably without giving much thought to the matter, that the Jews might be given back Jerusalem as their center but that the restoration of the Temple was to be postponed indefinitely. Members of the Jewish community, particularly the moderates and pacifists, were thunderstruck. The Roman emperor's word had proved to be hollow.

The nationalists, supported by some prominent rabbis such as Ishmael and Simeon, found it just as well that the Romans showed their true colors. They urged the Judaeans not to despair. They assured the people that the Temple would indeed be rebuilt soon, but under the aegis of the Parthians rather than the Romans. They asserted that the task of the Jews was to facilitate the Parthian victory by rebellions against Rome, acts that would destabilize the Roman rear while Trajan was preoccupied farther east.

Two Judaean nationalist leaders, Julianus and Pappus, who had gone to Syria to promote the nationalist cause, were apprehended in Laodicea, given a public trial, and apparently executed by the Romans in Lydda as a warning to the nationalists. The effect, however, was the opposite of what was intended. The execution merely served to make the nationalists more determined to prevail. At their insistence, Trajan's Day, the half-holiday that was established to commemorate the Trajan Declaration, was nullified and removed from the Jewish calendar, sending an implicit message to the Romans that the Jews no longer expected or desired to see the Temple restored under Roman auspices.

Nonetheless, Joshua ben Hananiah, perhaps the most prominent rabbi of his generation, intervened with his nationalist colleague Ishmael and exerted his great prestige to prevent what appeared to be an imminent rebellion in Judaea. He was afraid that such an uprising would only result in further devastation of the country and the people, without achieving any commensurate gains. However, Joshua ben Hananiah's realistic perceptions failed to carry as much sway in the other Jewish communities of the Roman East, where ex-

tremely violent and bloody outbreaks occurred in Egypt, Cyrenaica, and Cyprus that were suppressed with great severity and loss of life.

News of the Jewish revolts in the Roman provinces in the east had an electrifying effect on the Jewish communities of the Parthian territories. The Jewish communities in the Parthian Empire had enjoyed complete internal autonomy, and were thus quite content with Parthian imperial rule. However, the course of Trajan's march brought many of these communities under the control of the Romans, those who had destroyed Judaea and the Temple and had long carried out persecutions of the Jews in their domains. Along with other indigenous populations of the region, the Jews of Mesopotamia took up arms to defend their relative freedom from the Romans. In the districts heavily populated by Jews, Nisibis, and Nehardea, which were now behind the Roman lines, serious outbreaks of fighting took place. Similar developments then occurred in Adiabene, whose kings were Jewish.

These outbreaks coincided with the Parthian counterattack in 116, which now threatened to cut off and trap the Roman armies. Faced by such a disastrous prospect, Trajan was forced to attempt to regain these centers behind his lines at all costs and assigned the ferocious Moorish general Lusius Quietus to the task. Quietus ultimately succeeded in suppressing the uprisings in Mesopotamia, but it was too late to save the Roman position there in face of the Parthian onslaught. As a consequence, what was at first a remarkably easy Roman penetration into the Parthian Empire turned into a debacle. Although he was able to maintain a tenuous hold on parts of Mesopotamia, at least for the moment, Trajan had to fight his way back to his headquarters in Antioch and sustained very heavy losses in the process.

Trajan subsequently sent Lusius Quietus to Judaea, where he remained as governor, to suppress a rebellion that had erupted despite the efforts of the Judaean moderates to prevent it. Little is known of Quietus' campaign in Judaea, described in Jewish sources as "the War of Quietus." However, it appears to have been especially brutal. Following it, fresh indications of collective public mourning were reflected in the new prohibition enacted by the rabbis, to the effect that brides were no longer to wear wreaths at their weddings.

The emperor soon became seriously ill while still in Antioch and died on his way back to Rome in 117. On learning of his demise on August 11, the army proclaimed Publius Aelius Hadrian, whom Trajan had left in Syria as commander-in-chief of the Roman armies in the east, as emperor. News of the death of Trajan also sparked a rash of new rebellions against Rome from the Parthian frontier to Britain including, of course, Judaea where resentment of the Romans was perhaps stronger than elsewhere in the empire.

NOTES

1. *Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael*, "Exodus," 19:1–2.
2. Eusebius, *The Ecclesiastical History* 3.19.
3. *Midrash Rabbah, Genesis Rabbah* 64:10.
4. *The Babylonian Talmud, Gittin* 56b.
5. *Midrash Rabbah, Genesis Rabbah* 64:10.

Chapter 20

Hadrian and the Last Revolt

Hadrian, who had a rather different outlook than his predecessor, was confronted by a number of serious problems upon his accession to power. It was true that Trajan had expanded the frontiers of the empire further than ever before in the history of Rome. But it was obvious to Hadrian that there was no prospect of ever achieving an easy victory over the Parthians; indeed, the conflict seemed likely to endure for as many years in the future as it had in the past. The army had suffered grievous losses in what was obviously a failed adventure, and the troops were exhausted and anxious for an end to the fighting. It was also unwise for Hadrian to remain in the east for very long; it was important that he proceed to Rome as soon as possible to assert his control over the reins of the empire. Accordingly, he concluded that it was in Rome's best interests to reestablish the Euphrates as the limit of direct Roman control, and he definitively rejected Trajan's policy of expansionism. In effect, Hadrian sought a return to the policy that been established a century and a half earlier by Augustus.

Hadrian willingly surrendered to their previous rulers and client kings the territories of Armenia, Mesopotamia, and Adiabene that had been conquered by Trajan. At the same time, however, he considered it more important than ever to assure absolute Roman control of the provinces west of the Euphrates, where the spirit of rebellion had not yet been fully suppressed. Particularly troubling in this regard was Judaea. Hadrian had reason to be concerned about the fact that there was an understandably strong pro-Parthian sentiment among the Judaeans. After all, it was the Romans who had destroyed the

Judaean state and the Temple in Jerusalem, the center of its religious worship. Were there to be a successful revolt in Judaea, it could effectively split the Roman flank, separating Syria from Egypt, and provide a wedge that the Parthians might attempt to exploit to Rome's strategic disadvantage.

Above all, Hadrian had an immediate need for peace and stability along the imperial frontiers and appeared ready to make concessions to achieve it. In a move perceived as an attempt to conciliate the Judaeans, who were still in revolt when he became emperor, Hadrian removed Lusius Quietus from his post as governor and had him executed shortly thereafter. However, it hardly needs to be said that Hadrian's purpose in firing Quietus was not merely to appease the Judaeans. It seems evident that his primary concern was to get rid of a dangerous potential rival, someone who had opposed his election and who might pose a later threat to his authority. As noted by Spartanius, Hadrian "deprived Lusius Quietus of the command of the Moorish tribesmen, who were serving under him, and then dismissed him from the army, because he had fallen under the suspicion of having designs on the throne."[1]

In any case, the Jews heartily welcomed the removal of Quietus. Hadrian also raised Judaean hopes of at least a partial restoration of communal autonomy within the empire, encouraging the exhausted rebels to lay down their arms. The new Roman governor of Judaea permitted the Sanhedrin to meet in formal conclave once again, although he insisted that the meeting site be moved from Jamniah to Lydda. This was to prevent the former location, which had taken the place of Jerusalem as the center of Jewish religious and communal life, from also becoming a new center of nationalist aspirations.

The undoubtedly exaggerated expectations that were widely held regarding an incipient Judaean restoration soon turned into expressions of despair as the realities of the new Roman regime became manifest. No sooner had Hadrian established firm control over the empire than he began to qualify and then ignore the commitments, explicit and implicit, that were made earlier. The initial disappointment of the Judaeans with Hadrian soon turned to disaffection and began to engender a new spirit of rebellion that simmered just below the surface. It was kept under control only by the rabbis who urged restraint and caution, particularly the eminent and highly influential Joshua ben Hananiah. He considered another revolt against Rome as foredoomed to be a lost cause and therefore sought to find a means whereby the Judaeans might coexist with the Romans.

The political importance of the rabbis in the period after the destruction of the Temple can hardly be exaggerated. It must be recalled that the entire communal administrative and judicial structure was based on the Temple in Jerusalem. With its destruction and the conversion of Judaea into a standard Roman

province, it was to be expected that the Jews would become increasingly acclimated to the Roman political and cultural environment. The rabbis, however, intervened to prevent this from happening. They constantly implored the Judaeans not to make use of the Roman judicial system, but to have recourse only to the rabbinic courts that were set up throughout the country. In this way, they succeeded in forcing the Roman provincial authorities to acknowledge the autonomous jurisdiction of the rabbis within the Jewish communities of Judaea. Furthermore, to impede the expected process of assimilation to Graeco-Roman culture and ultimately to its paganism, the rabbis labored to instill a pride of being Jewish and devotion to the religion that came to exceed that which existed while the Temple stood. In doing this, they succeeded in purging the Jewish community of much of the Hellenistic characteristics it bore in earlier times.

It was during this period that the rabbis established the biblical canon. In this regard, it has been suggested that the exclusion of the *First Book of Maccabees* from the canon took place because of strictly nationalistic reasons, even though it is thoroughly Jewish in content and devout in spirit. It has been argued that "it was difficult for the sages of Israel, who had witnessed the brutal acts committed by the Romans against their people . . . to accept this book, which exalts and praises the Romans, and views the treaty that the early Hasmoneans concluded with the destroyers of their land and Temple as an outstanding event."[2] The net effect of this and other steps taken by the rabbis was to inspire a new sense of religious nationalism that Joshua ben Hananiah sought to keep in check. However, with his death in 130 C.E., a major voice for moderation was lost and nationalist sentiment quickly reached the point of extreme volatility. Indeed, it was later observed in the Talmud, "When R. Joshua died, counsel and [clear] thought ceased."[3]

The Romans countered with their own program of promoting Graeco-Roman culture to the detriment of Judaism. Thus, about the year 125, relations took a sharp downward turn, when the governor issued a number of edicts that directly impinged on the religious autonomy of the Jews. Rabbinic courts were forbidden to issue divorce decrees or exercise jurisdiction in certain other civil matters. There is some evidence that it was made illegal to recite publicly the biblical declaration of God's uniqueness, which became construed as a nationalist credo. It also seems likely that some religious observances were prohibited on the basis of being rituals with distinctively nationalist overtones. These included the blowing of a ram's horn during the prayer service on the Jewish New Year and the public reading of the *Book of Esther* on the festival of Purim.

The latter work tells of the redemption of the Jews, a not unusual topic of biblical literature, but does so in a unique way. The name of God does not appear in the book, and the redemption is achieved by man's efforts rather than by divine intervention. Within the context of the political debate within the Jewish community, the public reading of this particular work could reasonably be construed as a call for direct political action. Thus, one writer suggests that "it is highly probable that the severity of the recent enactment against the Jews was related to the Emperor's expected return to the East. [The governor, Tinneius] Rufus may well have feared that the revolutionary activity of the nationalists, of which he was aware, but could not suppress, would reach his master's ear. Unable to deal directly with the seditious propaganda, he sought to abolish the ceremonies which in his opinion were its principal support."[4]

Despite the inherent danger of flouting Rufus' orders, it became common practice to find ways of overcoming these restrictions by adopting a variety of stratagems that eventually became elements of standard religious practice. Ironically, Rabbi Ishmael, who appears to have been a principal although clandestine leader of the nationalists, was opposed to the employment of such practices to defeat the Roman laws. Since violating Roman law was to court discovery and possibly death, it seemed to him to be a poor use of the nation's human resources. In his view, the nation needed soldiers and not additional martyrs. Accordingly, he advocated the extraordinary principle that "faced with the threat of death a Jew may violate any commandment, even that against idol-worship," a position that was not accepted as normative without modification by the majority of his peers.[5]

It was as this point that Hadrian arrived in Judaea on his tour of the eastern provinces of the empire. He had set out from Rome in the second half of 128, with his first stop at Athens. Here, in the center of Hellenism, where he had sponsored the construction of several exceptional public buildings, he was received with open arms and full heart. Holidays were declared in his honor and he was feted regally. From there he proceeded to Cappadocia toward the end of 129, where he was to be gravely disappointed with his reception. He had invited the kings of Parthia and Iberia along with the minor rulers of the border region to meet with him in Samosata. The Parthian and Iberian kings not only failed to appear, they also neglected even to respond to the invitation. Hadrian took this blow to his ego very badly. Upon his return to Antioch in a foul mood, Hadrian encountered some other problems that enraged him and caused him to express a desire to detach the Phoenician coast from Syria, "in order that Antioch might not be called the chief city of so many communities."[6]

Hadrian was still smarting from these diplomatic failures when he arrived in Judaea. Although the official welcome was proper enough, including coinage

minted for the occasion of the imperial visit, Hadrian found two rather distinct receptions from the indigenous population. In the Hellenistic cities of the coastal region he was welcomed warmly. Thus, in Gaza, the elders renamed the city Hadriana in his honor. However, to his dismay, in the Jewish parts of the country he found a completely alien culture flourishing in total disregard of Hellenistic social and cultural norms. He saw the fiercely religious Jews as barbarians, anomalies in the Roman world. And it was these very same "barbarians" who now confronted him and brazenly asked for his permission to rebuild their Temple and to restore their formal communal autonomy. In effect, it was an attempt on their part to return Judaea to the special status that it had enjoyed within the empire in varying degrees before the time of Vespasian. Coming to Judaea from his two prior disappointments in Cappadocia and Syria and then being challenged by what he considered to be outrageous demands from "barbarians," who considered their religion and culture to be superior to that of Rome, was more than Hadrian could take.

It seems that it was at this point that he decided to issue the orders to proceed with the reconstruction of Jerusalem. However, it was not to be a renewed center of Jewish worship and Judaean national life. Instead, it was to be transformed into a Graeco-Roman city, Aelia Capitolina, modeled on the lines of the other principle cities of the provinces, replete with facilities for the cultivation of Hellenistic culture and temples to the gods of Rome. In place of the Temple, there was to be erected a temple to Jupiter. Its principal residents, in addition to the garrison stationed there, were to be not Jews but discharged Roman soldiers who had fulfilled their terms of military service. Furthermore, he was no longer prepared to tolerate Jewish religious and cultural autonomy. Judaea was to be transformed in a manner that would make it similar in all respects to the other provinces of the empire.

Rebellion was in the air, but the rabbis managed to prevent it from breaking out for as long as the emperor was in the region, that is, in Judaea, Egypt, or Syria. Despite his declarations of policy, they continued to hope that they might still prevail upon Hadrian to grant them some concessions that would permit an accommodation, thereby assuring continued peace and stability in the country. The great sage Akiba, now in his nineties, went to Egypt to plead with Hadrian but it proved to no avail. Their perspectives were so far apart that there was no real basis for communication. Once Hadrian departed for Greece in 132, the grim reality that he had wrought drove even some of the moderate Judaean leaders, including Akiba, to despair and to the support of a rebellion. Indeed, Akiba was soon to ascribe messianic aspects to the struggle.[7]

As long as the Temple lay in ruins, there was still hope of a divine intervention in the form of a messianic redemption. However, once the Romans began

construction of a pagan temple on the site, hope vanished for many. In effect, they could choose one of two options: compliance or defiance. One group, by no means the majority, saw compliance as leading to the ultimate destruction of Judaism, while others believed it was still possible to maintain a Jewish life even under the Hadrianic decrees. Indeed, the latter saw the option of defiance as completely unrealistic and one that would lead to the very destruction it was supposed to avert. It must be said that the latter view had reason on its side.

The situation was in no way comparable to that which existed some 60 years earlier when the Zealots rebelled, albeit unsuccessfully, against Rome. The Parthian threat was not a factor this time, and there were no other major distractions that might prevent Rome from bringing the force necessary, no matter how great, to quell any rebellion that the Judaeans might raise. It was, in fact, hopeless from the start. However, logic and the passions aroused by nationalist sentiments are not always, or even often, compatible. The ideological leaders of the nationalists, the rabbis Ishmael and Simeon, abandoned their clandestine activity and came out openly against Rome. They were promptly arrested and condemned to death even before the rebellion actually started. With their execution the leadership of the movement passed to a mysterious secular leader known as Simon Bar-Kosiba, or in some sources as Bar-Kokhba, an experienced soldier and strategist. Under his command, and despite its hopelessness, the long anticipated revolt against Roman domination erupted in the spring of 132.

The nationalists had long prepared for such an event by creating a secret military organization, training soldiers and guerrilla fighters and amassing stores of arms and other supplies in secret caches. Moreover, this time, in sharp contrast to the situation that prevailed in Jerusalem before the Roman conquest in 70, the Judaean forces were united under a single leadership from the very beginning. This gave Bar-Kokhba a significant advantage as a general over his predecessors who had to spend as much effort protecting themselves from their fellow Judaeans as from the Roman enemy.

In the initial stages of the war, the Judaeans avoided pitched battles with the regular Roman forces and concentrated instead on gaining control of outlying towns, which they fortified, building defensive walls and subterranean passageways. Although the conflict was fought in the main in the lowlands and mountains of Judaea, as well as in the desert, it also spread throughout the rest of the country and into Syria. By applying guerrilla tactics, the insurgents were able to harass and inflict increasingly significant losses on the Romans. It appears that Rufus appealed for assistance from the provincial governors of Syria and Egypt, and it seems likely that the Twenty-second (Diotrajana) Legion, which was sent to Palestine from Lower Egypt, was wiped out by Bar-Kokhba,

a significant feat for a rustic force of Judaeans without much battlefield experience. The situation soon reached the point where Hadrian, who was still in Greece, was compelled to reinforce the army in Judaea; and he reassigned one of his ablest generals, Gaius Julius Severus, from Britain to the task of restoring control over the country. Roman detachments from legions stationed all over the empire from Britain to Egypt were brought to Palestine to augment the forces there.

Hadrian himself arrived and set up his headquarters in Transjordan, where the campaign against Judaea was mapped. By this time it was already late in the year and the campaign was recessed for the winter. While the Romans went into winter quarters to await the spring, Bar-Kokhba and his forces spent the next few months preparing themselves for the expected onslaught in the spring of 133. He also had the additional burden of organizing a government to administer the liberated areas.

As anticipated, the Roman offensive began the following spring. Given the disposition of the Judaean forces and their fanaticism, Severus sought to avoid pitched battles, his primary concern being the avoidance of additional heavy Roman casualties. Instead, he resorted to a lengthy war of siege and attrition, by which he was able, Dio Cassius tells us, "rather slowly to be sure, but with comparatively little danger, to crush, exhaust, and exterminate them."[8] He laid siege to the rebel-held fortresses, systematically cutting off communications between them and preventing them from being resupplied. Thus isolated, the Judaean defenders of these positions ultimately were worn down by relentless attacks and forced to submit one by one. Dio Cassius claims that the Romans ultimately demolished 50 fortresses and destroyed 985 villages, killing some 580,000 people, aside from those who died from hunger and disease. He also observes that the Romans suffered heavy casualties in the conflict. "Therefore Hadrian in writing to the senate did not employ the opening phrase commonly affected by the emperors, . . . 'I and the legions are in health.' "[9] Although the historical evidence is not clear, there is a basis for concluding that Bar-Kokhba managed to wrest Jerusalem from the Roman garrison and that the partially rebuilt city was destroyed once again in the process of its recapture.

By the end of the campaigning season of 133, the advantage had clearly shifted from the Judaeans to the Romans, as the latter completed the reconquest of Galilee. By the early spring of 134, Hadrian felt sufficiently confident that the situation was under control and returned to Rome. All that remained was a mopping-up operation, and he left this to Severus.

Although Bar-Kokhba was perhaps able to take satisfaction in the fact that his forces gave an exceptionally good account of themselves against the Roman legions, realistically, the war could have but one outcome. After persisting for

some three and a half years, it effectively came to an end with the death of Bar-Kokhba at the fortress of Bethar in the Judaean hills. A strategically located stronghold dominating the important Jerusalem-Bet Guvrin road, it was chosen as the place where the Judaean forces would make their final stand against the overwhelming power of Rome. Placed under siege in the summer of 134, it held out for a year before its defenders succumbed to hunger and thirst in August 135. The town was then taken and its occupants slaughtered. The massacre that the Romans carried out in Bethar seared the memory of the Jews who survived the war. The traditional literature considered the fall of Bethar and its accompanying butchery as equivalent to the destruction of the Temple, an ineradicable blot on Rome in the judgment of Heaven. "R. Berakiah said: Said the Holy One, blessed be He: 'Even if I have no complaint against them save of what they did in Bethar, my judgment shall be executed on them.' What did they do in Bethar? R. Johanan said: The emperor Hadrian slew in Bethar four hundred myriads of thousands of human beings."[10]

The rebellion, which never had a chance of success, was over. Jewish nationalism, as a viable political movement, was buried with Bar-Kokhba at Bethar and was not to re-emerge until the latter part of the nineteenth century.

NOTES

1. *Scriptores Historae Augustae*, "Hadrian," 5, p. 17.
2. Joseph Klausner, *BiMai Bayit Sheni*, p. 12.
3. *The Babylonian Talmud, Sotah* 49b.
4. Louis Finkelstein, *Akiba: Scholar, Saint and Martyr*, p. 261.
5. *The Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin* 74a.
6. *Scriptores Historae Augustae*, "Hadrian," 14, p. 43.
7. *Midrash Rabbah, Lamentations Rabbah* 2:2.
8. Dio Cassius, *Dio's Roman History*, Epitome of Book 69.13.
9. Ibid., 69.14.
10. *Midrash Rabbah, Song of Songs Rabbah* 2:16.

Afterword

It seems reasonably clear that once Rome extended its reach to Syria it was inevitable that Judaea too would be drawn into its sphere of control. This meant eventual subjugation and loss of independence, as occurred sooner or later in the case of all the states brought within the embrace of Rome. It appears highly improbable that the great revolt against Rome ever had any real chance of success given the resources Rome was prepared to allocate to its defeat. However, this is by no means certain. Considering the dramatic developments that were taking place simultaneously in Rome, it is possible to construct a scenario which would have produced a different, albeit unlikely, outcome.

Had the forces of Judaea in 67–70 the coherent leadership of the Bar-Kokhba revolt, it is possible that they might have been able to cause Vespasian's legions to become bogged down in a drawn out war of attrition. Under such circumstances, one might speculate that Vespasian would have been a less attractive candidate to become emperor and might have been bypassed. If that had happened, it seems quite unlikely that he would have been in a position to get reinforcements to tip the military balance in Judaea in his favor, since the other legion commanders were preoccupied with the civil war that was raging over the imperial succession. This would have forced Vespasian either to come to terms with the Judaeans or to abandon the enterprise and use his legions to seek the purple.

As it was, it appears that Vespasian might have been prepared to reach some accommodation that would have permitted him to withdraw the legions from

Judaea without having taken Jerusalem. The nationalist leaders, who could not agree among themselves and were therefore incapable of making cogent political decisions, prevented this from happening. Instead, they expended almost as much energy fighting each other as they did the Romans. This is not to argue that if an accommodation had been reached with Vespasian, or, to use the suggested alternative scenario, if Vespasian had been fought to a stalemate and was forced to withdraw, that a military leader like Trajan would not have reconquered Judaea several years later. This cannot be known. What is clear is that, by their inability to form a common front before it was already too late, the Judaean nationalist leaders not only failed to gain the full support of the people in the early stages of the revolt, but actually forfeited the possibility of success. Moreover, the disarray in the Judaean leadership also effectively precluded the possibility of the Parthian intervention that so many looked for, if such were ever a real possibility at the time.

The Bar-Kokhba revolt also reveals some very interesting things about both nationalism and imperialism that are especially relevant to the contemporary world. The first is that the pursuit of nationalist aims does not necessarily lead to rational political or military action. There is a powerful element of the nonrational or metarational in nationalism, as the Bar-Kokhba revolt clearly demonstrates, which may completely put reason aside and adopt a course that seems totally irrational. Nationalism is one of those ideologies that men are willing to sacrifice themselves for, even though by such sacrifice they deny themselves the possibility of enjoying the fruits of the realization of their nationalist aims. By contrast, imperialism is a much more rational construct, and therefore more malleable. Imperialists, who almost by definition can wield overwhelming power over those they wish to subjugate, in one form or another, are rarely willing to fight to the death for a cause which they consider to be essentially optional in the first place. It is worth noting, in this regard, that when Hadrian called upon Severus to suppress the Bar-Kokhba revolt, the latter's tactics were designed to minimize Roman losses, even though it meant considerably prolonging the conflict. Innumerable examples of this in the twentieth century could also be adduced.

The contemporary debate in Israel over the disposition of the so-called "occupied territories," the very districts of Judaea and Samaria that played such a prominent role in the events described in this book, may be seen as conditioned by whether one makes a nationalist or imperialist response to the question. The critical issue in this debate is whether one considers retention of the territories to be inherently essential to the national interest, or whether one views their retention as perhaps desirable but not necessarily worth fighting over.

As pointed out at the very beginning of this book, the lasting symbol of the failure of Judaea to survive as a political entity in the Roman world is the Arch of Titus in Rome. Jewish teaching and tradition commemorated the tragedy it represents by placing a ban on Jews passing under it. This ban was maintained until 1945. At that time soldiers of the Hebrew Brigade of the British Army, many of whom subsequently joined the underground army that fought a successful war of liberation against the British, marched through the arch, symbolically declaring that a new era in Jewish history had begun.

Tragically, however, many of the divisive tendencies that ultimately crippled the ability of the Judaeans to stand united in the face of the Roman threat find almost exact replicates in the Israel of today. Given the differences in circumstances and actors in contemporary times from those that existed in Roman times, there still remain significant similarities. The Israel of today, because of its geography, is at the epicenter of a hostile Arab world, the land bridge between the Maghreb (North Africa) and the Mashreq (the Arab East). Although modern technology has reduced the significance of Palestine as a communications crossroads, the very presence of a modern progressive Jewish state in the heart of an intrinsically turbulent Arab and Muslim world has made its destruction the goal of the latter's radicals and reactionaries alike. After five wars in 50 years, the threat to Israel's existence remains viable, but perhaps the greater danger lies in its growing internal disunity. One can only hope that the lessons to be learned from the period examined in this work are absorbed and not ignored.

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